

1990

dominean monastic



search

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH

Volume 9

Fall/Winter 1990

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is published by the Conference of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers of the United States of America. The Conference is an organization of independent monasteries whose purpose is to foster the monastic contemplative life of the nuns in the spirit of Saint Dominic.

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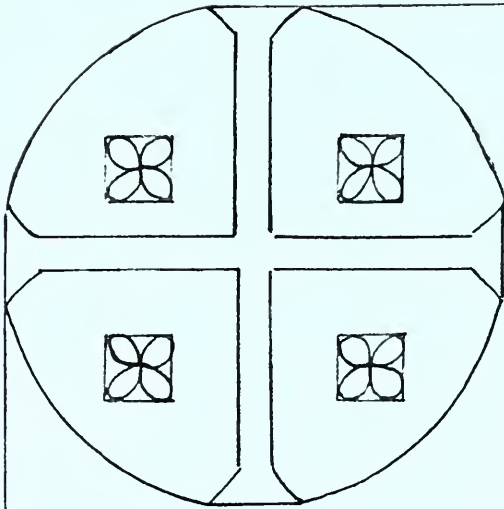
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how good and pleasant it is

when kindred live together
in unity!

it is like the precious oil on
the head,

running down upon the beard
on the beard of aaron

running down over the collar
of his robes.

it is like the dew of hermon,
which falls on the
mountains of zion.

there the Lord ordained his
blessing life forevermore.

In Augustine's mystical and allegorical exposition, this psalm becomes a hymn of praise to Christian monasticism. For it is in monasteries that the harmonious community the psalm praises as a great joy of life finds its realization. ... his only good in his monasteries had been the realization of a Christian community of love, and, by that, to bring Christ more deeply into the church and the world.

Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life

Adolar Zumkeller, O.S.B.

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EDITORIAL

As the Rule reminds us, the first reason for which we are gathered together in community is to live in harmony, having one mind and heart in God... The unanimity of our life, rooted in the love of God, should furnish a living example of that reconciliation of all things in Christ which our brethren proclaim in their preaching of the word (LCM 2:I,II).

The theme for this issue of Dominican Monastic Search is community life. Although basic to the Dominican charism in all its forms, community life resonates with special meaning for us, the nuns of the Order, as designating a reality at the very heart of our vocation and of our apostolic witness. The papers presented here reflect this special meaning, if not explicitly, then at least in the passionate interest with which they were researched and written by their Dominican monastic authors. Many of the papers are the fruit of the 1990 Study Program which pursued the correlative theme of communio and authority. In the context of this issue, they provide a balanced view of how authority supports community life while, at the same time, being an intrinsic part of it. The specific sub-topic of friendship in community is addressed in the Open Forum section.

This year we have the privilege of publishing two of the talks given by Guy Bédouelle, O.P. at the 1988 General Assembly on: "The Dominican Nuns: Historical Highlights." As a sort of introduction, we offer two papers by the nuns themselves, investigating the importance of lectio in the life of the early nuns. Together these presentations pursue what has become an ongoing theme of DMS, namely Dominican monastic tradition. Enriching the issue as a whole is a wealth of poetry mined from the abundance of our contemplation.

As editor, I continue to be excited by the quality of the items submitted for publication and by the breadth of interest shown throughout our communities. New names make their appearance this year as more sisters, young and not-so-young, respond to the challenge to share the richness of their lives in writing. I wish to thank the members of the Editorial Board and the contact persons in each community who have done their utmost to encourage this sharing. In so doing we place ourselves at the very center of what our Conference is all about.

Sr. Mary Martin, O.P.
Summit

*Some Reflections on the Metaphysical basis of Communio
According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*

Sister Mary of the Precious Blood, O.P.
Buffalo, New York

You may wonder why I've chosen to offer some reflections on the subject of *communio* from a metaphysical perspective. What does *communio* have to do with metaphysics: that branch of philosophy dealing with the kinds of things there are and the mode or manner in which they exist? If we can take St. Thomas' word for it, the human person's desire and ability to live in community with other human beings arises from the very nature of existence itself. Aquinas asserts that the concept of *communio*, of many individuals dwelling together united in mind and heart, springs from the nature of existence as such, so that all being is geared toward self-communication and inter-relation with others.

The interrelation of being and action

In St Thomas' understanding of existence, there is a close connection between being and action. When we speak of "action" here we're referring to anything that brings about some change or motion in something else in the physical sense. The existence of any being is not a static presence. It is first of all a presence in itself, that, by the natural dynamism of its initial act, becomes an active presence, manifesting itself to the community of other existents. Existence is a power-filled presence, which tends immediately to flow over into action, reaching out to others, exerting its influence on them. Action becomes the natural self-manifestation of a being, both of its presence (its act of existence) and the manner in which it exists (its essence). Aquinas never tires of repeating the phrase "action naturally flows from existence."¹ Here real being is conceived of as a dynamic inner act of presence, which has a natural aptitude and tendency to flow over into activity proportionate to and expressive of its nature. Every act, Aquinas says, is naturally communicative of its own perfection, according to the degree that it is in act.²

At this point we might ask, "why is action the self-communication of being?" Saint Thomas tells us that when a being acts on another, it produces some change in the other, it affects the other. Every effect must in some way be similar to its cause because it proceeds from its cause, it receives its manner of existing or even its existence as such, from its cause. Since a cause could not give what it didn't already possess, at least in some equivalent higher measure, there must always be a relation of likeness between effect and cause. Every being, says St. Thomas, by the very fact that it exists in act, tends to be self-communicative through its characteristic action.³ The entire universe of real beings may be seen as a unified system of mutually interacting, mutually self-communicating centers. Action, you might say, is what allows beings to get together with each other, to come out of their inward looking self-presence to be present to and for others. As the act of existence is the bond of unity of the universe, making all things intrinsically similar to each other, so is action the basic dynamic bond bringing them together, connecting them up with each other.

As This Relates to God

Does what we've just said hold true of God also? Saint Thomas speaks cautiously here; he doesn't want to say that reason alone can deduce that the divine nature is essentially self-communicative within itself. The fact that this is so can be known only through the free divine revelation of the mystery of God as three Persons in one nature. Aquinas doesn't want to say that God necessarily shares His own goodness in a created universe, so he argues by analogy that if all the creatures we know in fact manifest this self-communicativeness of their own goodness, it follows that the divine nature, the exemplar of all creatures, should have this same aptitude in the highest degree and that it is most "fitting" that it should exercise it. Although reason can't determine the actual mode of this divine self-communication, Christian revelation fills in the picture. According to this revelation, it is essential to the very personality of God as Father that he communicates the whole fulness of the divine perfection (or nature), without remainder, to the Son, and that both together, in a mutual act of love, communicate the identical fulness of the same divine nature to Their love-image, the Holy Spirit.

As This Relates to Ourselves

Now, how does all this apply to us and to *communio*? Well, as we have seen, all being is caught up in the unending dialectic of within and without, the in-itself and the toward-others, the inward-facing act of existential presence in itself and for itself, and the outward-facing act of self-expression and self-communication to others. So too, the life of personal being revolves around this basic polarity of presence to self and to others. Human consciousness does not start off in full, luminous self-presence. It begins, rather, in a kind of darkness, a state of being in potency toward knowing all things, in act toward none. To actualize itself, to make it luminously present to itself in act, it must first open itself up to the world of others, be awakened by their action on it and its own active response. Only then, through the mediation of the other, can it return to itself, to discover itself as "I," as this unique human person.⁴ I discover who and what I am by engaging actively in interpersonal relations with the other human persons around me, who treat me as a "thou" in an interpersonalist social framework of "I-thou-we."

St. Thomas was quite explicit in stressing the social nature of man in general; he beautifully describes the spontaneous joy there is in human community when he says, "It is natural for human beings to take delight in living together."⁵ He asserts that all human beings need each other; they need to abide together in an ordered social matrix in order to develop properly and satisfy their needs on all levels. And we know from Christian revelation that man's most basic need, his goal and end, consists in uniting himself with God in perfect love. Man finds himself in loving God, and in finding himself he finds freedom and wholeness. When man's free response to God's invitation to love resembles the response of God's Son, man becomes an "icon" of the Divine, fully human and morally perfect through participation in God's own life.

Conclusion

Communio, then, the idea of many individuals dwelling together as one, is intimately bound up with the concept of being. It follows that to be authentically for a human person is to live in communion with others, to make self the center of the widest possible web of relationships to all things, especially to all persons, to express self by loving, to live in love. For St. Thomas, the

final perfection of the whole of being is to form a community of reciprocally self-communicating persons in act. On the human level, this offers a description of *communio*, on the divine level, this approaches a description of the Trinity.

Notes

1. Summa Contra Gentiles, Book I, ch.43, (Garden City: Image/Doubleday, 1955), p.166.
2. De Potentia, q.2, art.1, ad 1, (Westminster: Newman Press, 1952), p. 45.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Summa Theologiae, q.87, art. 1, (London: Blackfriars/Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969), p.107.
5. De Veritate, q.10, art.8, ad 8 and 9, (Chicago: Regnery, 1962), p.43.

GENTLE BLOOM

Gentle bloom at summer's end
 Not like June
 Shouting, cavorting, spilling over lawn and walk
 Clamoring with color, odor: "Extra! Extra!"
 Capturing me.

Gentle bloom,
 You are different.
 I go out cautiously,
 Not to intrude on the garden's pre-dawn privacy
 Lit only by a handful of stars and a lingering moon.
 There it lies in fragrant abandon,
 Relaxed, unclutching as a child fallen asleep over its prayers.

And you
 Alone on this bush
 Eerie, as if
 Yourself were made of moonlight
 Lifting your pale face,
 Moist, creased like the face of the newborn
 Fragile
 Unbelievably here, now.

- But if I should come tomorrow, gentle bloom?

- Sr. Mary Thomas, Buffalo

COMMUNITY AS THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

Sister Mary of the Annunciation O.P.

In this article I would like to reflect upon *communio* in the light of being made in God's image. We are created in the image of God who is Trinity, a communion of three distinct persons in the unity of one divine nature. We are somehow like God whose existence is an eternal relationship of reciprocal self-giving and communication. God gifts us with the capacity for communion and by the grace given to us in Christ Jesus enables us to enter into this divine communion of love and life. It is in the mystery of the unity of christian community that we are able to give deepest expression to our creative reality and salvific destiny of being "Imago Dei."

Theological Dimensions of the Divine Persons

In the New Testament we find the divine persons spoken of in terms of their mutual relations. The Father is the origin, the source of the self-giving love and communication in God. The second person, the Word, is the speech and communication within God and with us through Jesus. The Spirit is the essential bond of love in the self-giving and self-communicating relationship of the Tri-Unity. The Trinity is the interpersonal sharing and communication of the divine life by Father, Word/Son and Spirit. The divine persons are constituted by their relationship to one another. God's inner life is a communication of life in a movement of ceaseless self-giving. Each person is a total self-gift to the other two. "The relatedness of one person to another in the Trinitarian mystery stands at the core of personality." (1)

Human Person as the Image of God

Our creation in God's image both constitutes the source of personal fulfillment and bestows the task of seeking unity and solidarity. We are created as unique and individual, as well as social beings. Both of these realities find their source in the Triune God.

The doctrine of man and woman as the image of God is the basis of biblical anthropology. Genesis tells us that God created us in integrity and harmony, giving humanity a very special relationship to the Godhead and to all creation. We stood at the pinnacle of material creation as knowing and loving beings, created in the image and likeness of God. Each person is called to know and to communicate with God in an intimate love relationship.

Our whole existence as persons can be defined in terms of relationship: relationship to God in whom we find completion, and an ordered relationship to others and to the universe. By our very nature we are called to an intimate relationship with God and with others. God's gift to us in our very creation is a fundamental capacity for communion. Humanity is made in the image of God not only because each individual is like God as a rational and free being, but equally because in our common humanity we are called to live in a communion of love, to be a communion of persons. This communion reflects in the created world the communion of love that is in God.

Before sin all these elements that make up our person and nature were in harmony. Through sin this relationship to God was broken off, resulting in our alienation from God, ourselves, others and all creation. Man and woman entered into the land of unlikeness. In our sinfulness we reflect God, at times, like shattered crystal. The grace of Christ has again opened to us the divine communion of love.

Trinitarian History

Our history is the history of God's presence with us. The whole event of salvation is anchored in the most intimate union between Father, Word/Son and Spirit. The sending of the Word has revealed the divine relations as a communion. Jesus' whole action is to declare the reality of God's presence dwelling in our midst and to seek to draw us into the same communion shared by the Father and himself. This communion is the root of all salvific action (Jn 15:5) and the source of the sending of the disciples and bestowal of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on individuals for the upbuilding of the community. The Spirit is the Gift given to us by the Father and the Son, whereby a full working out of the communion between Father and Son is accomplished in us as a permanent gift .

Through the coming of Jesus we become heirs with him by faith, in such a way as to become partakers in the divine nature. Baptized into his death and sharers in his resurrected glory, we enter into this communion through the dynamic movement of faith, knowledge and love. Such knowledge and love is a sharing in the eternal cycle of knowledge, communication and love between the Father, Son/Word and Spirit. We are taken into the divine unity of communion: as the Father and Son are one, we are one in them. Our communion with one another is to resemble, in the mystery of God's divine plan, the union of the Son with the Father in and through the love of the Spirit. In our union with one another Christians are "Imago Dei." We are united to God and in God with one another.

Our Trinitarian history reveals to us the eternal communion of the Father, Son and Spirit in their dispensation of salvation. Thereby creation is brought into the unity of the Trinity.

We see this reflected in Colossians where Paul speaks of Christ bringing all things into one and then subjecting them to the Father (Col 2:15-20). Unity is the perfection of creation and the fulfillment

of humanity. The reality of human solidarity--or the communion of persons--finds its source in the inner life of communion between the three persons of the Trinity and is the perfection toward which we are called by God. The unity of God and our participation in that unity and love demand unity in our christian life.

Christian Community as "Imago Dei"

The New Testament does not give as the primary model for perfection the unity of the solitary subject in relation to God. Our individual perfection is completed through the building up of the communion of persons which constitutes the Body of Christ called together by and in the one Spirit. The interpersonal at-oneness of the Triune God is reflected in the experience of the community of Christ, established through baptism and united in the Spirit. The community is meant to be a living icon of the Trinity. It is love in the Spirit that moves and binds us together in the community of Christ, in the koinonia of believers. The unity of Jesus and his Father is given to us as the model of Christian perfection (Jn 17:21-23). The Trinitarian unity is both model and source of the unity of believers. This unity has its origin in the divine life and action. It is christian community which is the perfect and completed image of the Triune God. To be in communion, one mind and heart, is directly related to imaging God and the goal of our perfection.

The three persons share the divine life by communicating it to one another. The self-giving and self-communication of each person in christian community are analogous to the Trinitarian communication. I define self-giving as the communication of what one is rather than what one has or does. In order to be in communion with one another we need to communicate our presence in self-giving. The full reality of the human person can only be found through a sincere gift of self. When we speak of our likeness to God we must always speak in terms of that which in some mysterious way is truly "like" and at the same time so radically different too. Our "self-giving" and "self-communication" to one another are necessarily incomplete and imperfect. Whereas God is the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that sharing is the Divine Essence, we though many become one as we enter into the mystery of God by loving and giving ourselves in love. Love acts in self-giving and self-communication. The deepest meaning of the human person is not a reality defined simply by individualism but includes, as essential to the definition, one who is interrelated.

Human personality is seen as a center of relationships through self-consciousness (self-possession) and self-giving. A person is therefore someone complete in himself but also someone who is constituted by his relations.(2)

Christian community is, then, a gathering of persons called by God in Christ, empowered and animated by the indwelling presence of the Spirit, who freely give themselves to one another in love. The human

person as "Imago Dei" is called to share in the shared love of the Trinity and to communicate that love to others. The shared love of the Trinity is expressed most fully in human terms in the shared love of the community of Christ, sustained by the indwelling presence of the Spirit.

In the abiding presence of God-with-us we are called into divine friendship which actualizes our communion and friendship with one another while transcending and fulfilling the unique personhood of each member. This community of friendship with God and each other gives a sense of the dignity of the human person. In this way, by following the law of Christ which is love, we reveal God in the truth of the divine reality: a communion of eternal reciprocal love and self-giving. Through our solidarity, our communion with one another, we embrace more fully our creation as "Imago Dei."

In such a community of friendship rooted in the Spirit the dignity of each person is recognized. Unity is achieved through a sincere donation of self which is reciprocated by a corresponding gift on the part of the other. Only thus can a true unity be established according to the dignity of each person. A personal commitment is required for the perfection of community. By following the law of Christ which is love, we reveal God who is love. Thus, through the New Testament revelation, we see from the interpersonal love in the Trinity what human love in God's image is to be. Love is the foundation of community expressed by and through communication and mutuality, a free and reciprocal commitment. As each individual member is able to give and to grow in the mystery of "shared love," there will be a great variety of relationships in the mystery of christian community.

Community as The Gift of the Spirit

Christian community is first of all a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the indwelling Spirit who makes us one. The continuing work of unity is effected through the Spirit who is the source of unity and also the source of diversity and giftedness in the community. It is the Spirit who brings to completion in believers the unity that is like the union between the Father and the Son. We become partakers in the communion of the Trinity through the unitive love of the Spirit who has been given to us by the Father and the Son.

We are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, baptized into the believing community, the Body of Christ, and by our love we reflect the unity of love in the Trinity. Each person has a unique contribution. It is not a unity without distinction, and this distinction of persons also reflects the reality of the interpersonal self-communication and self-giving of the Father, Son/Word and Spirit.

Gifts of the Spirit for the Community

In Paul's letter to the Romans, christian community is principally defined as the unity of a diversity of members, who, animated by the

Spirit, share a common task and a common destiny. A personal principle and a principle of unity are brought into harmony in the gifted diversity of God's people, bonded in one Spirit yet with multiple functions which enable us to complete the work of Jesus.

Unity is not impaired but served by the various gifts and functions. The interdependence of the gifts forms community and makes the unity a reality. Unity does not consist in uniformity, with the suppression of individual differences, but in the distribution of the needed gifts to individuals for the sake of the community. Each one's gift is completed through each one's relationship to the entire community and the interworking of community living. Here we have in the community an analogical, necessarily finite and limited image of the Trinity, "like" yet very different at the same time: that is, the harmony of persons in their distinctiveness engaged in a relationship of reciprocal love and self-giving.

Our unity finds its source in being members of God's household (Eph 2:18-22). The initiative comes from God. Our communion is founded in God and not solely in our own efforts. Thus communion is characterized by God's promises and gifts which call forth our response and commitment. Ephesians 4:16 stresses the interdependence of the members in contributing to and through one another the vital forces which derive ultimately from the head, Christ. The goal of the community is the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God.

Conclusion

Sin has not destroyed but diminished the reality of our "Imago Dei." Examples of our "unlikeness" to God abound in our dealings with one another, politically, socially and in our destructive use of creation. Our "likeness" to God is also there to see in our ongoing striving for renewal, in the implementation of the Gospel call to justice, and in our seeking to enter into a communion of love with one another. To love, to enter into a communion with our brothers and sisters, to build in the Spirit the community of Christ in our world is to become more fully human. In the final analysis, it is indeed in the transcendent reality of "communion with" that each person will be completed.

Solidarity among peoples and nations is the realization of the essential call and task of each person as the fulfillment of their created reality as "Imago Dei." Entering into communion with the Father, Word/Son and Spirit is a dynamic process of involvement with God, and therefore with society and the world through love.

St. Augustine very clearly put community as the primary tool for formation in his monasteries, and the striving for love as the way of perfection. We as Dominican nuns strive always to be the community of reconciliation that is the Gospel message of love preached by the brothers and sisters.

NOTES:

(1) Dorenkemper, M.J., "Person (In Theology)", New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 11, 1967, p.168.

(2) Ibid., p. 169.

IN SILENCE

Blessed are you among women
Your womb became the cloistered
resting place of the Word Incarnate.
There He spoke with you in silence.

You broke this silence when Elizabeth
greeted you;
In sublimest praise and thanks,
You magnified His Holy Name,
Leaving us a treasure:
your soul's eloquence.

At Nazareth, you taught the Word
the first word to utter.
What it was remains hidden,
for nothing is recorded.
The maid-servant and the King
served each other - in silence.

Still, full of Grace, at the foot
of the Cross,
No word, no voice is heard
from you.
But you consoled Him;
Your very presence quenched His thirst.

Silent at the foot of the Cross,
Silent still, when they laid Him
in your arms.
Full of Grace...gazing at the Word;
The heart of a Mother speaking
to the heart of her Son
- in silence.

Sister Myriam of the Holy Spirit
Bocaue, Philippines

Nehemiah
A Model Leader

Sr. Mary Emily, O.P.
Lufkin, TX

Scripture abounds with examples of authority figures and lessons in authority and communio. One of the finest examples of leadership-authority is Nehemiah. The Old Testament book bearing his name is short, only thirteen chapters. In this account the mercies of God shine forth upon his people through one man inspired with love for his brothers, his fatherland and his God.

The year was 445 B.C. when the Jews were still exiled in Babylon, though some had already been allowed to return to Jerusalem to resettle with the remnant. Nehemiah was still in the "land of exile", in Babylon, serving as cupbearer to Emperor Artaxerxes I. This position was a most honorable one and took considerable courage since the cupbearer was to taste the king's wine before the king in the event the wine was poisoned. Already Nehemiah, a servant and a man under authority, was learning to be continually disposed toward laying down his life for another. Within a very short time he, as leader in the capacity of governor in Jerusalem, would repeatedly die to himself for the sake of the community in their joint service and enthusiasm for the work of rebuilding the city wall.

Why become so intensely zealous over the rebuilding of the wall? Ezra, scribe and priest, had just previously encouraged the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. But the city had been left in ruins for decades, seventy years, and now with the wall in ruins the city was defenseless. The precious temple lay as a jewel box for any avaricious enemy to plunder.

Furthermore, the city's wall was a pride and joy. It displayed to all around the concern the people had for their own domain, and the Jews were rightly concerned for the protection of the Temple. And so it was that Nehemiah rose to the occasion offering his services to God, Israel's "wall and defense", for the rebuilding of the physical wall.

The wall of the city was a symbol of unity to the chosen people (cf. NJB, Ps 23b). God called forth Nehemiah to lead the people toward the realization of their hope for peace in their city and in their homes as together they rebuilt their wall. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, prosperity for your homes! Peace within your walls, prosperity in your palaces!" (Ps. 122:6,7)

A good leader draws strength from God.

God is the supreme authority. The Hebrews knew this. He was the Divine Presence in the fire, on the mountain, in the ark, in the cloud. St. Thomas expresses it this way: "God is not only his own godhead; he is also his own existence" (1, q.3, a.4). Nehemiah depended entirely on God as is clear in the nine prayers he offers in the thirteen chapters of this book.

A good leader bears the burdens of his people.

The psalmist says, "he bears our burdens, God our savior", and Isaiah says, "he bore our iniquities". The four evangelists and the letter writers of the New Testament certainly testify to the cross Jesus carried and endured for us. Nehemiah also took on the burden of his people. When his kinsmen tell him how the survivors living in Jerusalem were in a demoralized condition, with the walls in ruins and the gates burnt down, Nehemiah writes, "On hearing this I sat down and wept; for some days I mourned, fasting and praying before the God of heaven " (Ne 1:4).

A good leader assumes responsibility.

Nehemiah takes on complete responsibility for the task of rebuilding the wall around the holy city Jerusalem. He approaches King Artaxerxes, and he is given permission to leave and act as governor for the duration of the task.

A good leader is well informed.

Nehemiah had arrived in Jerusalem and had been there only three days, just enough time to unpack, so to speak, when he decides to begin at once. His first move is not to roll up his sleeves and get to work, but rather to study the ruined wall and the entire layout of the situation. He writes, "Under cover of dark I went out through the Valley Gate towards the Dragon's Fountain as far as the Dung Gate, and examined the wall of Jerusalem where it was broken down and its gates burnt out. I then crossed to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but it was impassable to my mount " (Ne 2:13,14).

A good leader motivates those under his charge.

Nehemiah felt strongly urged by God for the reconstruction of the wall. At the outset of this task he inflames his fellow countrymen with his own enthusiasm and zeal for the holy task ahead. "I then said to them, 'You see what a sorry state we are in: Jerusalem is in ruins and its gates have been burnt down. Come on, we must rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and put an end to our humiliating position!' And I told them how the kindly hand of my God had been over me, and the words which the king had said to me. At this they said, 'Let us start building at once!' and they set their hands to the good work " (Ne 2:17,18).

A good leader is realistic and works at his task.

The task of building is more than a dream; it is sweat and blood. Nehemiah and the Israelite community rolled up their sleeves and labored hard, quickly completing the wall encircling Jerusalem in little over a month. This task that never seemed possible became a reality when authority and community worked hand in hand. There is truth in the saying, "Pray as though everything depends on God, and work as though everything depends on you". But neither Nehemiah nor the Jews considered the project was theirs, for the text clearly states, "When all our enemies heard about it (the completion of the wall) and all the surrounding nations saw it, they thought it a wonderful thing, because they realized that this work had been accomplished by the power of our God " (Ne 6:15,16).

A good leader delegates work.

Much of Nehemiah's success as a leader is due to his wisdom in involving the entire community in the noble project of building the wall. Whole families and clans had specific jobs and functions. Organization on the part of leader and community meshed so Chapter 3 relates, although the work is compartmentalized, it is as though one person, the "person" of Israel, was doing the work. This is the healthy outcome of delegating work and tasks.

A good leader remains confident and courageous in the face of opposition.

Opposition came in the form of insult and ridicule by the governor of Samaria whose name was Sanballat. Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites also took up the taunts. It went like this: "Can they put new life into stones taken from rubbish heaps and even charred?", and, "If a jackal were to jump on what they are building, it would knock their stone wall down!" (Ne 3:35,36). Nehemiah's response? "We, however, prayed to our God and organized a guard day and night to protect the city from them " (Ne 4:3).

A good leader sees to the social needs and problems that exist.

A cry went up from the people: "We are having to pledge our sons and daughters to get enough grain to eat and keep alive...we are having to mortgage our fields, our vineyards and our houses to get grain because of the shortage...we have had to borrow money on our fields and our vineyards to pay the royal tax..." (Ne 5:1-5). Nehemiah took immediate action in favor of the people: "When I heard their complaints and these words I was very angry. Having turned the matter over in my mind, I reprimanded the nobles and the officials ..." (Ne 5:6,7).

A good leader is honest and does not exploit.

Jerusalem and its inhabitants lay in impoverishment. It took faith beyond measure for the Jewish community and its leader-governor to restore the temple and rebuild the wall in the face of terrible material needs of the families in the area. It would have been so easy for Nehemiah to fill his purse at the expense of the populace. Chapter 5 is a testimony to his honest administration. He never exacted monies from the people. He even went so far as to never levy the governor's subsistence allowance. "But I, fearing God, never did this. Also, not acquiring any land, I concentrated on the work of this wall and all my attendants joined in the work together, too " (Ne 5:15,16).

A good leader will express largess.

In Matthew 5:42 we read, "Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away." This injunction is not just for the Christian community. Generosity and largeness of heart are in season in every age. Nehemiah was exemplary. "Furthermore, magistrates and officials to the number of a hundred and fifty ate at my table, not to mention those who came to us from the surrounding nations. Every day, one ox, six fine sheep, as well as poultry, were prepared for me; every ten days, skins of wine were brought in bulk " (Ne 5:17,18). All of this, of course, came out of Nehemiah's "bank account."

A good leader is steadfast in personal attack.

In the sixth chapter Nehemiah's long-standing enemies try intimidation.

"There is a rumour among the nations- and Gashmu confirms it- that you and the Jews are thinking of rebelling, which is why you are rebuilding the wall, and you intend to become their king; and that you have even briefed prophets to acclaim you in Jerusalem with the cry, 'there is a king in Judah!' Now, these rumours are going to reach the king; so you had better come and discuss them with us.'" (Ne 6:6-8). The intent of Sanballat and Tobiah was to terrorize Nehemiah, to try to talk him into taking sanctuary in the temple, and thus to demoralize the Jews still working on the wall and stall the operation. Nehemiah was steadfast in his resistance to their ploy: "Should a man like me run away? Would a man like me go into the Temple to save his life? I shall not go in!": (Ne 6:11,12).

A good leader will be diligent to enact laws.

Chapters 7 through 13 are condensed in a nutshell in the last sentence of this book, " And so I purged them of everything foreign; I drew up regulations for the priests and Levites, defining each man's duty, as well as for the deliveries of wood at the proper times, and for the first-fruits " (Ne 13:30-31). In other words, Nehemiah was diligent in laying down the law. What exactly is a law? A law is the same in Nehemiah's day as it is in ours. St. Thomas offers four elements of a law: 1) law is an ordinance of reason (it should make sense); 2) it should be for the general good; 3) it should be made by whoever has care of the community; and 4) it should be promulgated (1-11-90-4). Nehemiah saw to this with leadership gusto.

Conclusion

Nehemiah was responsible for the reconstruction of the wall. Yet we have also seen him in the capacity of a model leader. Does the water run deeper than that? Yes it does. This layman, simply intent on listening to the promptings of his God, the God of Israel, was before all else intent on the faith of his fathers. He was consumed with zeal for the honor of God. Thus he could write after all the construction was completed: "The wall was finished within fifty-two days, on the twenty-fifth of Elul. When all our enemies heard about it and all the surrounding nations saw it, they thought it a wonderful thing, because they realised that this work had been accomplished by the power of our God " (Ne 6:15,16).

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AUTHORITY AND COMMUNIO IN PHILEMON

- Sr. Mary Thomas, Buffalo

The story is simple, and probably quite familiar. Paul is writing to Philemon. That may sound like an obvious, rather trite remark. But naturally, it has been challenged by the exegetes. Could it be that he was not writing to Philemon, as devout readers have thought these many centuries? Well yes, truth to tell, some claim that he was writing to Archippus, whose name appears shortly after that of Philemon in the greeting: "To Philemon, our beloved fellow worker, and Apphia our sister, and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and the church in your house..." However the majority of commentators on this very brief letter consider it to be a letter to Philemon, and so I have accepted it as such for our present purposes.

Brief as the letter is, it contains an interesting cast of characters, a plot and a problem which is not resolved but which leaves us pondering on the possibilities, the outcome of this Christian/pagan dialectic.

Even though the Letter is well known, it will do no harm to run through the characters, giving the interpretation which seems most traditional, or which at least still seems to be held by the mainstream commentators.

First, of course, there is Paul, writing from prison. The traditional view was that it was a Roman prison, but more recently commentators have favored Paul's Ephesian imprisonment, for reasons which we shall see further on. In any case, the picture is of Paul as an 'old' man -- not all that old by our standards but by the standards of his own times -- probably in his sixties and nearing the end of his life.

Philemon is a young, well-to-do and respected Christian living in some town in the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor, probably Colossae. Apphia, whom Paul refers to as "our sister", is generally thought to be Philemon's wife, and Archippus their son. Continuing with the traditional conjecture, Philemon is believed to be a convert of Paul's, who possibly met him for the first time at Ephesus. The mention of "the church that meets in your house" completes the picture of a prosperous, friendly young convert who is able and happy to place his home at the disposal of the local Christians for their meetings.

The final character in this domestic drama is Onesimus, a slave belonging to Philemon, who has run away, and in the process may have caused his owner considerable damage. Onesimus is thought to be a Colossian like Philemon. He has fled to Paul in prison for refuge. Paul has taken him in and has converted him to Christianity, and a close bond has developed between them, Paul referring to him in the letter as "my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment". Onesimus has revealed to Paul that he belongs to Paul's dear friend and co-partner Philemon. He does not want to go back to his master. Severe penalties were permitted by law to be dealt out to runaway slaves. He prefers to stay with Paul and render him every service possible in the prison.

So Paul faces a real dilemma, caught between two people whom he dearly loves, and trying to do justice to both. At this point he takes in hand his moving "Letter to Philemon".

Before looking at the contents of Paul's letter we might do well to note the interplay of authority and *communio* in the situation which is confronting him.

First, authority. Paul addresses Philemon as his "beloved fellow worker" (1) but has no hesitation about asserting a little further on, "I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required" (8). Then a few verses later we read: "I preferred to do nothing without your consent" (14). Towards the end of the letter Paul says: "Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing you will do even more than I say." (21) In these phrases there is a clear expression of authority -- "command" and "obedience" leave no room for doubt. Paul and Philemon are partners but Paul's authority is beyond question, in spite of the aside, "I preferred to do nothing without your consent".

This last phrase poses a question. Is Paul being adroit, strengthening his authority by a show of deference which will make Philemon's obedience all the more willing? Or is it rather that Paul is constrained, by the very nobility of his nature, to mingle authority and *communio* in a single blend until authority is wholly penetrated with love?

Philemon himself -- like the centurion of Capharnaum -- is a man of authority. He presides over his own household presumably, and possesses at least one slave. In the Letter Paul is showing him by a very concrete demonstration the Christian way of exercising authority. Even as Paul himself refrains from commanding Philemon, and prefers to appeal to him "for love's sake" in the matter of receiving Onesimus back, so Philemon is expected to follow this same principle and receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave, but as a beloved brother... as you would receive me" (16, 17). Authority is there not for its own sake, but to lead into, grow into love.

It is out of respect for Philemon's authority over Onesimus that Paul has decided to send the slave back in the first place-- "I would have been glad to keep him with me", he points out (13). But Paul's hope is that Philemon will exercise his rightful authority over the runaway slave, "and have him back, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" (16).

Authority, then, in Paul's view, is clearly a thing to be accepted, revered and defended; but it must be transformed, in the Christian way of life, into an expression of authentic love. This concept of transformation, of an authority suffused, so to say, with love, leads us directly into the idea of *communio*. The two are closely linked both in the Letter to Philemon and in life itself as Christ in His coming has transformed it.

How many forms of *communio* are depicted in this very short letter. There is the obvious union existing between Philemon, his wife and his son, the harmony that allows of their drawing together a group of fellow Christians who form a church in their home. These people, whom we imagine between the lines, assemble in Philemon's home to celebrate the sacred mysteries together. They share the same ideals, values and goals -- the same longing to gather more followers of 'the way', and Paul prays "that the sharing of your faith may promote the

knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ" (6). He thanks God because "I hear of your love and of the faith which you have towards the Lord Jesus and all the saints" (4). Paul is bonded personally with this community about a hundred miles distant (if his prison is in Ephesus, not Rome, as seems likely), "for I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you" (5).

The flow of *communio*, harmony, Christian love, circulates freely through the group at Philemon's home, runs in a strong current to delight Paul's soul in his prison and returns enriched with the torrential love of Paul's great heart, to pour new power and vitality into the group, where "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed" (7).

Again, there is a stirring *communio* depicted between Paul and Onesimus. "I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment." (10). Onesimus is to Paul "more than a slave ... a beloved brother" (16). The strength of this new bond between Paul and Onesimus becomes the source of a deepening bond between Paul and Philemon, and Paul believes and hopes that it is going to result in a profound *communio* between Philemon and Onesimus, a transformation from the relationship of master and slave to that of brotherhood in Christ.

Here we have an intricate interlocking of relationships, a pattern not infrequently observed in our own lives. Friendship between two expands to include a third; the resulting *communio* is threefold and images the Trinity. In fact, it seems valid to ask whether there can be authentic *communio* between less than three. Where it looks like just two, there is always, for the Christian, the invisible Third who created the bond originally, restores it to wholeness should it be shattered in the way of human frailty, and fills it with life and fruitfulness.

The relationship of authority and *communio* in the Letter to Philemon is seen to be reciprocal. It is difficult to put one's finger on the place where one ends, the other begins -- or it would be difficult if we did not know that the name of God is Love. Authority can be seen as the work of love, "ordering all things sweetly" in the lives of these early Christians.

The close of Paul's letter gives a hint of what was to follow. "Prepare a guest room for me..." (22). It is difficult to think that Philemon did not take back Onesimus, now as a brother and fellow worker in spreading the good news. There is reason to believe, further, that Onesimus eventually became the bishop of Ephesus. We may also be allowed to fancy Philemon and Apphia joyfully hastening to prepare a room for Paul, and gathering the members of the local church to greet him. Indeed this conjecture is the reason put forward by some commentators for the suggestion that Paul's prison was in Ephesus, not Rome. This would have been much closer to Philemon's home, and would explain Paul's assurance that he could plan a visit in the near future.

We can put down this "perfect example of the letter-writer's art" feeling that the human dilemma was faced and the problems solved by the sheer grace of a Christian blending of authority and *communio*.

Based on Fitzmeyer's article on Philemon in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary.

WOOD NOTES *

The red bud trees entwined among the willows,
 Cast rosy mists upon the brightly colored earth;
 The silver stream with dew-stained violet collar,
 Interspersed with dainty sprigs of sweet anemone
 Trims the stunning jacket of jaunty, sportive Spring.

Blue ridges in the sky at dawn,
 While the pale stars fade one by one,
 And glimmer in the misty pool
 Now flushed with crimson from the sun.

How charming are crisp satin buds
 Primly set on cherry twigs
 Soon disclosing blossoms,
 Blushing pink
 To fill the air with fragrant perfume
 Of newly ushered Spring,
 And in the center of the golden pistils
 Sparkles a tear drop of the stars.

A lombard poplar stands beneath my window,
 Lifting her fair form heavenward;
 The soft sheen of the moon splashes on the leaves,
 Fluttering like shimmering silk about her,
 And adds soft mystery
 To her little gracefulness.

Beautiful thoughts surge through my mind,
 As the dusk of the evening approaches,
 And night floats softly down to earth
 Like a mystic blue scarf growing darker and darker;
 The tints of the sunset glow from the stream,
 Winding and wending its way through the forest.
 In the distance I hear the hoot of the owl,
 A reminder of life around me,
 And feel the veiled charm of soft-toned twilight.
 The stars, like bright pebbles, appear one by one
 To challenge my limited knowledge.
 The trees, tall and slender, in lacy green dresses
 Receive the Night's benediction,
 And the gloaming steals sweetly and softly upon me
 Bringing peace to my heart and soul.

Mother Marie Rosaria, O..P.
 Rosaryhill, Cainta
 Philippines

* This poem is a reprint from OAKWOOD ANNUAL, 1924.
 It was published under the name Elizabeth G. Hiett,
 MMR's baptismal name.

TOWARDS A GREATER DEMOCRACY:
A LOOK AT THE SHIFT IN THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY
BETWEEN PACHOMIUS AND AUGUSTINE

Sr. Mary Lucy of the Divine Word
Buffalo

The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None of them ever claimed anything as his own, rather, everything was held in common.

How often we hear these words from the Acts of the Apostles, without perhaps giving ourselves over to the power that lies within them. But yet they are powerful words, so powerful in fact that they generated the cenobitic form of monasticism, and also a very unique vision of that life. This text deeply inspired both St. Pachomius and St. Augustine in establishing monastic communities and in formulating a rule, and was a driving force throughout their lives.

On considering the contrast between the lives of Pachomius and Augustine, one may be tempted to say that apart from this common inspiration for community life there was little similarity between the two men. And perhaps in a sense this is true. But still there remains some common ground. In looking at the similar ideals they held and at the different circumstances of the monasteries they founded, I would like to trace a shift in the role each saint gives to authority in their rules and consequently in the quality of community life.

Pachomius, born in 292, converted to Christianity as a result of kind treatment he had received at the hands of Christians when he had been drafted for military service. He vowed that if he ever got out of the army he would become a Christian and serve others. Such was to be the case, and he was baptized in 313. He became a disciple of Palamon, but after seven years remembered his vow to serve others. So he left Abba Palamon and started his own monastery.

After a first unsuccessful attempt, Pachomius gathered many monks to his way of life, founding twelve monasteries (one for women) that totalled thousands of members. Because of the large number of monks in each monastery he imposed a detailed rule and set up a structure of authority. The monks were divided into houses according to the type of labor they performed, and each house had a house master and his assistant. The days were given to manual labor, the nights to vigil. Each house had morning and evening prayer, and a few evenings a week Pachomius would instruct all the brethren in the Scriptures. He travelled to his other monasteries to give them instruction also. His own personality and charism were truly the driving force behind his communities, and he was deeply loved and greatly revered by all his brethren. His monasteries were famous for their spirit of unity.

Augustine was born at Tagaste in 345, and was also a convert to the faith. While accounts of the monasticism of St. Anthony and St. Pachomius had a profound effect on Augustine, especially in drawing him towards conversion, he clearly had a different idea of monasticism in mind. The communities he gathered to himself, especially in the beginning, consisted in groups of close friends who devoted themselves to contemplation and intellectual discussions. Even as his ideas progressed and developed, the monasteries he founded were small and labor was intellectual rather than manual. Most of his monasteries

were for clerics, although a few were for lay brothers. Pachomian communities on the other hand consisted mostly of lay brothers; priests would only be accepted if they were willing to follow the Rule exactly as the other brethren did. Augustine was very drawn by the ideas of community and of the personal relationships existing between the members.

Community for him was a goal to be pursued for its own sake, not merely to serve some other end.... There are other forms of monastic living which lay stress on living in common ... yet one can find no legislation in which the notion of community has so consciously and forcefully been made the central point of monastic living, in which it has been declared the prime object for which men come together. ¹

While each saint took a different approach to establishing authority, due in large part to the contrasting size of their communities and the type of work in which they were engaged, it is important to remember one aspect of authority which both espoused as essential. Both Pachomius and Augustine viewed the role of superior as one of service to the brethren. Their great desire to serve the brethren and their compassion in meeting the needs of those under their charge gave rise to many similar directives in their Rules.

An issue that troubled both saints as superiors was that of fraternal correction. Both call for a discreet handling of the situation requiring correction. Augustine saw it as one of the most difficult tasks of the superior, but felt that it *must* be done, and with love. "He saw it as necessary for the well-being and growth of the community." ² Pachomius too saw correction as a difficult task, and indeed this may have been the reason for the failure of his first community. For it appears from accounts that he did not correct the brothers directly at all, but hoped instead to convert them by his humble and patient example. "They will see", he said, "my patience and my sorrow, and they will come back to God; they will do penance and they will fear God."³ His monks in consequence had no respect for him as a superior, and after suffering at their hands for five years he had to expel them forcibly from the monastery, using the bar of the gate as a cudgel to push them outside. ⁴ There is another story from the desert about Pachomius asking a fellow abbot if it is right to correct the brothers. The answer he receives is affirmative, but only in regard to the brothers in his own monasteries. ⁵

That Augustine was aware of this type of situation can be seen clearly in Chapter Six of his Rule. Here, dealing with the subject of asking pardon and forgiving offenses, he adds: "But whenever the good of discipline compels you to speak harshly in correcting your subjects, then, even if you think you have been unduly harsh in your language, you are not required to ask forgiveness *lest, by practicing too great humility towards those who should be your subjects, the authority to rule is undermined.*" While the desire to correct one's subjects should spring from love and the act be carried out in all humility, it is necessary at the same time to maintain one's role as superior. For if a superior loses his or her authority, as in the case of Pachomius, it will be impossible to preserve order in the community and consequently the goal of becoming one in mind and heart will be unattainable.

It would seem, then, that fraternal correction is necessary not only for the sake of the individual being corrected, not even merely for the sake of the community as a whole, but also in order to preserve the office of the superior. For is it not the vision of the superior, and the authority to act on that vision, that is the driving force behind achieving oneness of heart and mind within the community?

This is where we come to the most important difference in the roles given to authority by Pachomius and Augustine. Pachomius, in what is already a break from St. Anthony, gives to the superior (in his next and highly successful monastery) absolute authority. The superior has charge of both the spiritual and material needs and well-being of the brethren. He is a father to the brothers in the areas of preaching, teaching and the giving of spiritual direction, and sees that regular life in common is observed and that the material needs of the monastery are met. Of Pachomius it was said: "As for our father Pachomius, he would very often go round to the monasteries, comforting the brothers by the word of God as a nurse comforts her children (I Thess 2:7) with her heart's affection." ⁶

The basis of Pachomius' authority was his rule, which is quite detailed. Throughout it he places a strong emphasis on obedience. It is this obedience, not only to Pachomius as a spiritual father but more importantly to his rule, that most clearly reveals a shift from the tradition of St. Anthony and the other desert fathers. For now, "obedience dominated the whole of life ... not simply obedience towards a spiritual master, towards the Elder the monk had freely selected, but it now became obedience to a superior officially recognized as the head of the community and, at the same time, obedience to a whole collection of codified regulations". ⁷ From the writings of his disciples we see that all the brothers loved Pachomius deeply and seeing his teachings, and the rule itself, as God's will, they responded with great faith. ⁸

Augustine takes a new and radical tack. Although he in no way discounts the value of faith and obedience to the superior and the rule, he places his emphasis on love. Love is the driving force behind all the directives of his rule. The superior is to serve in love and the brethren are to obey out of charity. It must not be forgotten, however, that the service of the brethren in love was the driving force of Pachomius' life and of his communities as well. But the actual structure of authority has shifted in Augustine's vision of monastic life. No longer is the superior the spiritual father or mother of individuals, set above the rest of the community. Now, the brother or sister holding the office of superior still remains one of the brethren, one of the sisters, although certainly having true authority. "The superior should be obeyed as a father or mother", Augustine says in Chapter Seven of his Rule. "This may appear as the most important motive in the formation of his conception of obedience, and it shows how far he had progressed beyond the ideals of older monastic rules. Undoubtedly, from the beginning superiors had been called 'Father', but to advance from that to the idea of obedience 'as to a father' was to have come a long way". ⁹ The emphasis in the role of the superior has shifted from *one* having absolute power over *many*, to *many* sharing in the power of the one in order for all to become *one* in love.

This shift is made even clearer by Dominic's unique vision in his placing the weight of authority in the body of the community. This is most particularly evident when the community is gathered in chapter. The system of Dominican government is very democratic in allowing the professed members of the community to discuss important issues and vote, and so have a true share in the authority of the superior. In a sense the community forms itself, but under the guiding hand of the superior, rather than giving itself over to the vision of just one person. As our Constitutions indicate: "At the regular chapter the nuns gather as sisters in charity and humility under the leadership of the prioress to give one another mutual assistance in the renewal and development of the regular life." ¹⁰ For it is here, by learning to legislate out of charity, or "by placing the common good before one's own", ¹¹ that the nuns "pursue communion through their manner of government" ¹². It is now the vision of the whole community that is the driving force behind oneness of mind and heart. And if it is the community that now that forms itself, love will have to be the operative element, rather than that faith in one person which was required in the Pachomian community.

This shift from the absolute authority of one to the sharing of authority within and throughout the community seems to be a great leap, and a daring one. But yet, all is not simply left in the hands of a group of people, for the rule and the authority of the superior are still essential. I think the key to Augustine's view of community and authority lies in the last Chapter of his Rule, where he takes his inspiration from St. Paul's concept in the Letter to the Romans and says: "You are not slaves living under the law but women and men living in freedom under grace." It is not through obedience alone that we are formed into a community, but more importantly, we are to live as free and responsible Christians cooperating in the formation of the whole community and obeying and serving out of love for God and love for one another. This, Augustine says at the very *beginning* of his Rule, is the *end* you have come here for.

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7. Bouyer, loc. cit., p. 325.
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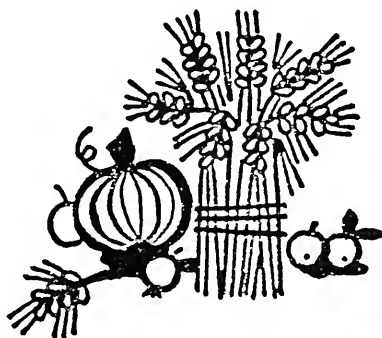
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The earth has yielded
its fruits
God our God
has blessed us

FAITH

Sister Mary Joseph, O.P.
Los Angeles, California

*We tick them off with ease.
Matthew's scattered list is ours to tease;*

*The lame, the maimed, the poor, the sick, deformed,
The lonely, weak, the sore-afflicted, scorned.*

*From out the world they cry,
With these we can identify.*

*Christ in His Passion hidden deep we see.
Ours to hear, to love and keep the mystery.*

*About our own? We rubbed elbows today.
Don't we know the life? - We turn away.*

*Pretend we do not hear unuttered cries,
Smile at their wordless sighs.*

*We say in truth, "God help the stupified."
They only leave us mystified.*

*Our brother's keeper - Where was it heard before?
And then we think of them no more.*

*They seem to us so shrouded - -
In mystery - - so clouded.*

*We meet them in the psalms but lost in cares,
Where are we? - lost in ours, not theirs.*

*We, with all our gifts, nature and grace beside.
We fail to understand this Crucified.*

*Even He must smile in playful mirth,
Bulging at the seams, our own untimely worth.*

*Why must we so divorce ourselves from truth?
Our law? - "An eye for eye, a tooth for tooth"?*

*We have the choice to throw up hands, despairing,
When we should rather for our own be caring.*

*At least we have been shown:
The Lord's ways are not our own.*

*Ah! here we have it all refound - -
Christ in deeper mystery - more profound.*

THE REGULAR CHAPTER AS A WORKSHOP FOR UNITY AND CHARITY

Sister Maria Agnes, O.P.
Summit

The mystique of chapter is articulated in the Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns in whose lives the search for God is being realized by pursuing, among other things:

communion through their manner of government in purity of conscience and the joy of sisterly concord, "in freedom of spirit." (1)

Dominic handed down to his followers both a sense of community and a love for the common life. This particular aspect of his charism found its expression in the application of this insightful saying derived from Roman law: Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet, which means, "What is of concern to all must be dealt with and agreed upon by all." (2) That is why LCM 7 stresses the participation of all in the ordering of the life of the monastery for a more fruitful contemplative life and sisterly communion. "A good which meets with general approval," argues Humbert of the Romans, "is quickly and easily achieved." (3)

Without regular chapter there can be legal entity but no sisterly communion in the true sense of the word because:

like the Church of the Apostles, our communion is founded, built up and made firm in the one Spirit. It is in the Spirit that we receive the Word of God the Father with one faith, contemplate him with one heart, and praise him with one voice. In him we are made one body, share one bread, and finally hold all things in common (LCM 3 I).

Dominic was, both by his temperament and by his Christian education, a relational person and a community man. For him the essential milieu of a religious is the community. He manifested his fidelity to the regular life from the time he was a canon at Osma to the early years of the Prouille foundation where he himself had established the monastic observance. It is also recorded that he loved to join in the community of his fellow canons when he passed through the Chapters of St. Paul of Narbonne and of St. Nazaire of Carcassonne during his travels. (4)

In principle as well as on the basis of experience, we know that the value of person and of community may come into conflict. It need not be. To be a real person means to be in-relation-to. A balanced concern for both common and individual needs is a strong feature of our Rule and Constitutions. Individualism needs to be balanced by common life. Augustine insisted that the mores of the monastery derive from the amores of its members to the extent that they renounce self-interest for the sake of the common good. Augustine's Rule established unity in charity as the hallmark of Christian monastic life. This unity is based upon the sacred dimension of the human person as image and likeness of God. The love of charity is the source of this oneness (Cf. Rule I. 3 & 9; Cf. LCM 2 II). Dominican monastic life provides for a rich and

diverse unanimity where persons are not lost in the anonymity of a crowd. Within a truly united community, a good kind of diversity is possible and even healthful. Such diversity manifests the power and vitality of authentic Christian love. (5)

A CALL TO RENEWAL

At the regular chapter the nuns gather in charity and humility under the leadership of the prioress to give one another mutual assistance in the renewal and development of the regular life (LCM 68).

It is by the community as a whole that standards and norms are discussed, synthesized and formulated to effect this renewal. The depth of monastic commitment that binds all the sisters is to be drawn up on the basis of what all the sisters are able to perform. John Cassian may have anticipated this when he suggested that "if we retain a measured sense of what is possible, the perfect observance will be found, even when people's abilities vary." (6)

We all know from study and experience that our monastic observances are shot through with powerful currents of life. We daily experience God's living Word which calls for sustained effort and fidelity. Like the sap that keeps the tree alive and supple, it is the function of the chapter to revitalize those areas in our life that have grown torpid and stale. It can be an occasion for decisive soul-searching in common. Through chapter discussions we also keep in touch with contemporary questions and answers that affect the Church as well as the various models of culture in the world.

In chapter the Prioress, too, listens to what God is saying through those whom she is called to lead. It is a real asceticism to seek and discover God's will. The Word of God is the deepest value of obedience --- obedience, in the etymological sense of "listening to" (ob+audire), that is, listening to God and to one another in humility and charity.

Let us keep in mind that the regular chapter is more than just a guardian of the observances. It is a workshop in which prudential balance is established between the letter of the law as the precise will of God in every concrete situation and the essential content of God's plan to which the community is committed. This includes referring to past experiences of the community whether negative or positive. One can authenticate a past experience in the present situation by re-choosing or rejecting it in freedom. Fidelity means taking our past history into account. This posits a new vision which describes something we intend to do in the future. Keeping a community alive calls for fidelity to the present moment, gratitude towards the past and hope for the future. This is necessary not only for the growth of individual members but as a condition of inner renewal in community life which is its second nature. Renewal is a part of permanent Christian formation. (7)

The real purpose of chapter is to constantly clarify the spirit of regular observance and to live the contemplative life in a more authentic way by reaffirming the values inherent to our Dominican identity.

SILENCE AND CHAPTER

The Dominican mystique of silence is closely associated with collatio, with sharing and listening at the service of our charism: truth and charity. (8) Dialogue enriches our perception of truth. Truth, in all its dimensions and when accepted with openness and docility, frees us from the narrowness of our vision about God, about ourselves and others. Only one who has listened to God in prayer can speak the truth in communal and inter-personal dialogue. Communication gaps are bridged by words. But it is also important to keep in touch with ourselves first in order to understand what we really mean and feel and think before expressing ourselves to others.

Silence and solitude go hand in hand with chapter. Unless we have discovered and experienced our personal worth as individuals in the depth of silence and solitude, we will not be able to communicate life-giving truth to others. "Silence," says Ambrose Wathan, OSB, "creates and forms the ground and root of every word." (9) Communication is the articulation of silence and silence is the milieu for listening to God's Word and to the words that form in our mind and heart. The rhythm of silence and chapter builds up character, sharpens the intellect and strengthens the will. We can also gain a wealth of wisdom and self-control in the give and take of dialogue. The link that joins silence, solitude and chapter cannot be underestimated. This is a human, Christian and religious phenomenon. Dialogue as harmonized by the silence enjoined by our Rule and Constitutions is a guarantee that Christ is present in our midst and is at the center of our community life. A short and meaningful text from Jean Leclercq may serve to sum up the preceding points:

In every case the words spoken to men must come from those heard from God: they ought to spring up from that intimate contact with him which actually was silence. But just as silence is part of our communion with the universe, the word which arises from it responds to the urgent need for communion which is expressed in communication. (10)

THE DYNAMICS OF DISCUSSION

In our present practice, the time for holding regular chapter is determined in the directory of each monastery. It is to be held at least once a month (LCM 69). During chapter we seek to participate in the creative and life-giving power of God's Word which is being addressed to the community in a relational atmosphere of truth and charity. Communication, especially verbal communication, is not always easy. We have to work at it until it becomes God's work in us. Without Christ at the center, we will not be able to share ourselves, our ideas, feelings and experiences with one another. Only the Spirit of Jesus can break down our mental and emotional blocks and open the way to fruitful dialogue. Our dialogical stance has to be honest, open, trustful and free from prejudice. When we enter into discussion, it means we are ready to renew and readjust our viewpoints.

Whether or not genuine exchange takes place at chapter depends on the participants. Creative and growth-producing dialogue is possible when each sister is prepared to speak honestly out of her feelings and convictions with reason and objectivity. She must have learned to discipline her subjective feelings and be aware of the others in the group. Being open to the value and

meaning of what is happening in chapter is vitally important in discernment and in achieving harmony and unity. Listening with a perceptive mind and an understanding heart is a necessary concomitant for a person's growth in communal living.

We mentioned earlier the joint role of solitude and silence in interpersonal and communal dialogue. True solitude and healthy silence are discernible through its fruits. "Solitude gives birth to the original in us," according to Thomas Mann, "to beauty unfamiliar and perilous --- to poetry. But also, it gives birth to the opposite, to the perverse, the illicit, the absurd." (11)

When we speak at chapter and anywhere else, do we resonate in conformity with the Spirit of Jesus? The point is not whether we say little or much, but whether or not our words call forth the compassion and love of Christ in us and through us. Sometimes, our language needs redirection. It needs to be purified of its destructiveness and its pollution. Jean Leclercq offers us another insight into this:

Speech is ambivalent because of our fallen nature, our limitations; it can either be for mediation or an obstacle to communication. Speaking can be a source of illusions and this is true in both our communication with others as well as with God. (12)

During chapter discussions, therefore, we do not take hold of each other by our words or coerce people to think and live up to our inspirations and norms. As soon as we impose our viewpoints upon others, then we deny growth to those others. Any form of coercion, domination, moral pressure or psychological manipulation will shrivel up communication and, consequently, hurt sisterly communion.

There are creative ways --- skill and tact --- by which we can express our differences without destroying unity. We relax and lay down our defenses while we listen to the different viewpoint with genuine acceptance and without condescending tolerance. We do not look at those who differ with us as aggressors or as people who block our way and underline our limitations. We always say YES to the person. Love cannot be reduced to a mere sharing of ideas or of knowledge or of truth. "Solitude and silence," Thomas Merton realized, "teach me to love my brothers for what they are, not for what they say." (13) This is in consonance with LCM 4 I which states that "in order for each monastery to be a center of communion, let all accept and cherish one another as members of the same body, differing in native qualities and functions but equal in the common bond of charity and profession."

Judgment is not growth-producing and instead of building up community, judgment creates a chasm and alienates the other person because it is an attitude of "not-being-with" the other. A self-righteous and judgmental attitude expresses itself in an inundation of words that have no creative and life-giving value for community. Sisterly communion is consummated beyond verbal exchange by accepting the other, not as she appears to our perceptions, but as she is striving to become her true self before God.

The uniqueness of each person and the multiple possibilities and options that emerged during the discussion can make consensus difficult to reach. We all know that dialogues do not necessarily lead to consensus. Concrete choices expressed in comments and suggestions must have to find their way into a more basic choice. The common value of diversity has to be synthesized at the closure and the synthesis shall be expressive of the main pattern of thought that emerged during the discussion. The closure should strongly point to a specific and unidirectional goal which was stated in the agenda at the beginning of the chapter.

There is no absolute moral certitude that we can make or are always making the right decision. If we have truly entered into a prudential sharing of knowledge, experience, hindsight, insight and foresight, we can be confident that we are making a good decision, the choice that is being asked for at a particular moment and situation.

Guidelines are to be set by the regular chapter on certain limits to diversity in order to insure fidelity to the community's basic orientation and charism. The guidelines must resonate the values of the chapter participants. A kind of osmosis is established and sustained between the right of the individual and the common good.

CHAPTER AND ON-GOING CONVERSION

Dominican monastic life, like all forms of Christian life, is unswervingly committed to conversion as an on-going process. This is, fundamentally, an invitation and a challenge to steadfast love for the God who is faithful to us. The Constitutions provide for some form of self-examination and self-accusation on faults that militate against the common good and the regular life. This takes place during the regular chapter where the prioress may also give some spiritual exhortations, administer corrections and recommend suitable penances for faults committed against observance (Cf. LCM 70, 71 & 72 I).

In practice and in the concrete, this provision exacts fidelity to the essential things that make up the regular life after the example of St. Dominic "who followed the Rule of the Friars Preachers and the conventual order with great exactitude and without dispensing himself." (14) "The Prioress, as the faithful servant of the monastery," states LCM 195, "should at all times foster the unity of charity, constantly promote the contemplative life of the nuns and diligently care for regular observance" (Cf. Rule VII.46; Cf. Thess. 5.14). This fidelity to the observances is a means of purifying the traces of sin in us and it also rectifies whatever falsity or ambiguity hinders our growth in faith, hope and charity. Self-accusation of faults, correction, forgiveness and reparation correspond to the spirit of Christian conversion. Participation in chapter is, in itself, a response to the call to continuing renewal of life. Chapter is a salvation event brought to us by the Gospel, the Rule and the Constitutions. It often happens that chapter discussions can uncover our hidden faults. Our defects shall be pointed out to us in "some other way according to the custom of the community" (LCM 70).

The monastic community is also a forgiving and a healing community. Forgiveness is not an approval of sin and neither is it a condescending tolerance of faults. Forgiveness frees the erring person from shame-based feelings and makes her deepest self radiant with possibilities for truth and love. The loveliness of a person is brought out when encouraged and affirmed by love.

INTERIORIZATION OF REGULAR OBSERVANCE

Beyond the chapter rubrics is the eschatological aspect of renewal, namely, the interiorization of the observances. The transcendent value of internalizing external discipline is a basic concept of Augustine's Rule. The regular chapter serves as a workshop for this interiorization and examples of this can be drawn out from the Rule. (15)

*And what good is it to scatter one's wealth abroad by giving to the poor, even to become poor oneself, when the unhappy soul is thereby more given to pride in despising riches than it had in been in possessing them (I.8)?

*When you pray to God in psalms and hymns, think over in your hearts the words that come from your lips" (II.12).

*Let not your mouths alone take nourishment but let your hearts, too, hunger for the Word of God" (III.15).

*Do not say that your hearts are pure if there is immodesty of the eyes because the unchaste eye carries the message of an impure heart" (IV.22).

*But suppose all this escapes human notice, what will she do about God who sees from on high and from whom nothing is hidden (IV.23)?

*If your sister, for example, were suffering a bodily wound that she wanted to hide for fear of undergoing treatment, would it not be cruel of you to remain silent and a mercy on your part to make this known? How much greater then is your obligation to make her condition known lest she continue to suffer a more deadly wound of the soul (IV.26).

*You may judge from this how lacking you are in that holy and interior garment of the heart when you quarrel over the garments of the body (V.30).

*A sister who is never willing to ask pardon, or does not do so from her heart, has no reason to be in the monastery even if she is not expelled (VI.42).

*You (to the Superior) should still ask forgiveness from the Lord of all who knows with what deep affection you love even those whom you might happen to correct with undue severity (VI.43).

*In your eyes she (the Superior) shall hold first place among you by the dignity of her office, but in fear before God she shall be as the least among you (VII.46).

*The Lord grant that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity as lovers of spiritual beauty giving forth the good odor of Christ in the holiness of your lives, not as slaves living under the law but as women living in freedom under grace (VIII.48).

God, of course, is the centrifugal force for mutual attraction in the building up of community. The Trinity is the perfection of inter-personal relations, involving the fullness of indwelling love and communion. The interiorization of unity in charity which we are to maintain in our hearts will be fostered and expressed in inter-personal relations and in the unanimity of our life. Daily experience of the Eucharist constantly tests and proves this unity whose source is Christ. In the final analysis, the unity and charity in the community are in proportion to each sister's personal love of Christ and as that love is permeated by her Dominican charism: truth and love.

NOTES

- 1 See I.V; Quote is from Innocent IV, 11 May, 1272
- 2 Marie-Humbert Vicaire, OP, The Genius of St. Dominic: A Collection of Study Essays. Edited by Peter B. Lobo, OP (Nagpur, India: Dominican Publications, 1989) p. 41
- 3 Expositio Regulae, XVI; Opera de Vita Regulari, I.72
- 4 Vicaire, op. cit., p. 88; Cf. nn. 134 & 135, pp. 241-242
- 5 See Thomas Martin, "Oneness of Heart Intent Upon God" in Review for Religious (Sept.-Oct., 1982) p. 108 f.
- 6 Institutes, Preface 9, Quoted from Philip Rosseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian (Oxford University Press, 1978) n.35 p. 195
- 7 Cf. Vincent de Couesnongle, OP, Confidence for the Future (Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1982) p. 111
- 8 The genesis of this idea came from the talk given by Father Thomas McGonigle, OP at the National Assembly of the Dominican Nuns in West Springfield, Massachusetts, 1982
- 9 "The Word as Silence: On Silence and Speech in RB" in Cistercian Studies Vol. XVIII 1982.3, p. 195
- 10 "Silence and Word in the Life of Prayer" in Word and Spirit 6 (Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1984) p. 118

- 11 "Death in Venice" in Stories of Three Decades (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1976) p. 395
- 12 Op. cit., p. 107
- 13 The Sign of Jonas (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953) p. 261
- 14 Processus Boniensis in the Acta Canonizationis S. Dominici, ed. A. Walz MOPH XVI (Rome 1935) n. 12
- 15 Cf. Thomas Martin, op. cit., pp. 713-714

FLAME OUT OF HEAVEN

Maiden wrapped in silence,
 Wrapped in need so great:
 Her time is fast approaching,
 The midnight hour is late.

Fire glows inside the hostel,
 Fire glows on courtyard path;
 There glows in maiden waiting
 Fire cast from Heaven's Hearth
 To set the world
 ABLAZE.

Sr. Maria of the Eucharist, O.P.
 West Springfield

COMMUNITY DISCERNMENT IN CHOOSING THOSE IN AUTHORITY

Sr. Mary Jeremiah, OP
Lufkin, TX

Our Constitutions places responsibility for selecting persons in positions of authority within the community or chapter itself. The chapter elects the prioress and councillors. Those offices which are appointed by the prioress must be approved by the council. Thus, in one way or another those with authority are given such by the community.

How can the community know if it has made the right choice? We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and especially as manifested through discernment.

What Is the Gift of Discernment?

St. Catherine of Siena tells us that discernment is rooted in humility and charity.(1)

Father Ladislav Orsy, SJ, describes it as perceiving the inspiration of grace as well as a "contemplative insight into God's ways...for those issues that cannot be solved in any other way, that is, by ordinary investigation and reasoning."(2)

Discernment is spiritual seeking to know God's will for a given group, circumstance or course of action, as well as determining whether an inspiration originates or is motivated by the Holy Spirit, the human spirit, or a demonic spirit.

All Christians are called to exercise personal discernment for their own lives using such tools as Scripture, the teaching of the Church, duties of one's state in life, quality of life, etc. These tools are also important for communal discernment. In a community where all are striving to do God's will there must be a basic trust that God is indeed guiding the community. Without this fundamental confidence the bonds of peace, harmony, and charity are undermined. "Authentic discernment is never off the top of one's head or rooted in personal feeling alone. It is factually, doctrinally, ethically, and psychologically informed."(3)

Christian communal discernment is a very complex, mysterious activity, because not only are the natural means of intellect and psychology involved, but the infused gifts of the Holy Spirit become operative. All the gifts are needed, but especially that of counsel.(4)

Abbot Vonier says that "through the gift of counsel the Christian enters into the secret ways of God; unknowingly yet unerringly" choosing the correct course of action.(5)

The gift of counsel touches and enlightens the limited human intellect in such a way that it shares in an inexplicable manner the very knowing of God. St. Thomas Aquinas says it is as though the person was counselled or directed by God Himself. The gift of counsel dispels all doubts and gives the person or community an intellectual conviction, an interior assurance, of what God wants.(6)

In a life of Faith the agility of a mind proficient in supernatural prudence is a halting, clumsy stumbling compared to an act of Counsel. By prudence a man brings himself to obey God after deliberation; but in Counsel the Holy Spirit suddenly and without discussion brings the soul into the presence of the Divine Will. In a moment, without a series of serious thoughts, the soul knows exactly what, how, why, when, where, and by what helps the will of God may be fulfilled. The premises for its conclusion are hidden in Divine Wisdom; only the conclusion is revealed to it by Counsel, but its practical action is no less certain.(7)

Being guided by the gift of counsel does not mean becoming lazy or indulging in quietism. One must exercise all the human faculties of investigation, observation, and judgment, but ultimately one must pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The human mind gathers all its information, but at the moment of discernment the gift of counsel by-passes all "data-processing". "In counsel the entire picture of the present is framed in the past, and the soul sees the whole at a single glance....Its instantaneous and intense certitude seem almost instinctive."(8)

How then Does the Community Discern and Identify Persons for Positions of Authority?

A Christian community, a monastery, is the Body of Christ in microcosm. Each member is unique and important. Each has a special gift to offer and a role to play for the building up of the Body, the community. All do not have the same gifts. There are many gifts distributed among various members.

In discerning which persons to choose from the community for positions of authority, the individual gifts of each person must be evaluated. The evaluation of persons' gifts is a spontaneous process which occurs constantly in family, workplace, religious community. It begins the day we are born, join a company, or enter a monastery. It is normal and positive and necessary for the growth of the community.

The evaluation of gifts enables us to develop new ones we possessed only in potential, strengthen those we already use, or sacrifice others which are not as essential at a particular time in our lives or not called upon to be used for the common good.

Each person has received particular gifts for service, for the good of others. Some gifts are of a temporary nature, while others are permanent, in the sense of being part of our personality or innate qualities bestowed by God. For example, a person may have an extraordinary, natural gift for music, this would be "permanent". But

this person is not appointed to the liturgical or musical aspects of the community, thus "temporarily" she does not exercise this gift.

Father James Hayes, MS, says that good leadership in religious communities is a matter of a "real vocational" call and not something arbitrary. In other words, the person has some natural gift or can be trained in this. Work assignments in the business world are not given as rewards, they are quite predictable, as "cause and effect". There need not be great surprises at election time, because the process of discernment and evolution of the person and community has been going on continuously.

Father Jude O. Mbukanma, OP, in his book, Charism and Holiness, points out that the qualities of leadership must already be inherent in the person. One cannot expect to vote for a person who has not already shown the qualities needed. It is unrealistic to think they will develop after if they have not first been manifested before in some degree. This is why it is important from the first day of entrance to comply as well as possible to training in the various duties and grow in assuming responsibilities. Leaders are not chosen at random, just "to give someone a chance". They have already demonstrated they are leaders, even if it is in the way they take care of the garbage and other "inconsequential" duties.

Father Jude offers certain qualities to look for in choosing persons for positions of authority:

- the quality of one's life: what one says and does; one's spiritual depth.
- not everyone is a leader. Some can start projects and have good ideas to be initiated, but cannot keep them going.
- the leader is usually NOT the initiator, but the one who knows how to get the idea acted upon.
- a person who can make decisions.(9)

In monastic life, however, we are not looking for corporate or managerial leaders. Our focus is upon living our contemplative vocation surrendered to God's will. Our Constitutions gives us very different, yet essential, qualities to look for in choosing persons for roles of service in authority.

#195. The prioress, as the faithful servant of the monastery, should at all times foster the unity of charity, constantly promote the contemplative life of the nuns and diligently care for regular observance.

#253.I The nun to be elected prioress should:

- 1) be charitable, prudent and conscientious regarding regular observance;
- 2) have sufficient knowledge of the laws and traditions of the Order;
- 3) be able to participate in the community exercises.

Those chosen to be councillors manifest the very gift the name suggests: counsel, advice, prudence, etc. The one appointed as Novice Directress is to be "outstanding in her life and doctrine, experienced in spiritual matters, and skilled in the discernment of spirits".(LCM, #114.II.1)

Is an Election a Political Event?

Although we live a cloistered life we are not immune from the influences of the world: those we brought with us when we entered and those which continue to impinge upon our life. Does "politics" enter into a religious community? No and yes. Unfortunately, we have a very pejorative understanding of politics due to the current status of government. Politics is often associated with dishonesty, corruption manipulation, strategies to control and put certain persons in power. This should not be the case in a religious community where all are disciples of Christ the "Servant" par excellence. If this is the case, then the community is not living fully its charism of mutual charity, humility, trust and unity, seeking God's will in prayer and sacrifice. (10)

In actuality, "politics" is a very positive word which needs to be redeemed. It comes from the Greek, polis (city) and politikos (citizen). Aristotle says that the human person is by nature a social being. It is natural to seek and live in community: family, various groups, villages, state. Therefore, the activity of striving for the common good of the group is political. Thus, in this sense one could say "yes" an election is "political" if it seeks the common good of the community.

Can We Know Infallibly We Are Following the Holy Spirit?

No and yes. No one on earth is "infallible", except the Pope, or an Ecumenical Council, when teaching ex cathedra on faith and morals. However, this does not mean a religious community cannot be reasonably certain that it has made the right decision.

If all are sincere and seeking God's will, there is a certain faith and trust in the community as a whole to know and follow God's will. Bruce Yocum offers some criteria for discerning the Spirit's guidance. First, there is a simple physical principle known as "resonance". Today's slang expresses it as "good vibes (vibrations)". There is an interior, peaceful assurance and response in our hearts and minds of listening to the Spirit. Second, consider the spiritual tone and effect. Is it critical and resentful or positive and edifying? Third, does the decision glorify the Lord? Give it the test of time and use the criteria Jesus Himself gave us, "by their fruits you will know". Finally, some people have a special gift of discernment and can "tell with greater clarity and swiftness" if something is from God.(11)

Even if there seem to be tragic results from a decision this does not mean the Spirit has not been guiding the community. The fruits one

looks for are not simply exterior peace and prosperity, but more importantly the virtues and fruits of the Holy Spirit St. Paul mentions in his letter to the Galatians.

What if Someone Thinks She Has an Inspiration from the Holy Spirit but the Community Does not Accept It?

This person may be broken-hearted and truly have a good idea which is ahead of its time. However, not every good idea can always be accepted immediately. Sometimes personal projects, ideas, and desires have to be sacrificed for the greater good of the whole. Sometimes ideas need to be allowed time to "ripen" and deepen, both for the individual and the community.

This calls for great humility and obedience. It is good to have differing opinions in order to influence and balance one another. The ultimate test of the Spirit is the fruit which follows: peace, love, cooperation, unity, self-sacrifice.

Conclusion

If a community is seeking to live as well as possible in loving fidelity to God's will, it can have a certain trust and confidence that the Holy Spirit will lead and inspire it to choose the proper persons to exercise authority. The primary tools for discernment might be reduced to two: docility to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and consideration of the fruits of decisions and actions.

The fundamental means of discerning the presence and inspiration of the Holy Spirit is "by their fruits you shall know" -look for peace, charity and cooperation at every element and stage of the election or decision-making process. These are the "infallible" signs of the Spirit. Anger and bitterness are indications to examine to see if there are bad-will and self-seeking motives.

Emphasis on the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit have been a characteristic of Dominican spirituality and theology. In fidelity to this great tradition, a monastic community can know peace and confidence when choosing those who will exercise authority.

FOOTNOTES

1) St. Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue, chapter 9.

2) Ladislav Orsy, SJ, Probing the Spirit - A Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, Inc., 1976) pp. 15 & 32.

3) Donald L. Gelpi, SJ, Charism and Sacrament - A Theology of Christian Conversion (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) p. 92.

4) Walter Farrell, OP & Dominic Hughes, OP, Swift Victory - Essays on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), pp. 115 & 119f. Cf., Yves Congar, OP I) Believe in the Holy Spirit in 3 Vols. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983) p. 183.

5) Don Anscar Vonier, OSB, The Spirit and the Bride (London: Burns Oates & Wasbourne, Ltd., 1935) p. 192.

6) St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica II-II, q. 52, a. 1, ad. 2. "Quasi consilio a Deo accepto."

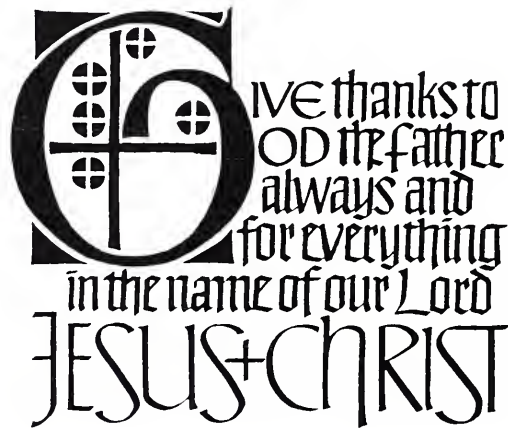
7) Farrell, op. cit., p. 115.

8) Ibid., pp. 117 & 119.

9) Jude O. Mbuganama, OP, Charism and Holiness (Yaba, Nigeria: Dominican Publications, 1986), p. 145.

10) Paul Hinnebusch, OP, Community in the Lord (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1975) p. 174.

11) Bruce Yocum, Prophecy (Ann Arbor, MI: Word of Life, 1976) p. 117.



COMMUNITY AND SOLITUDE

Sister Susan Heinemann, O.P.
North Guilford

To love is good, too: love being difficult.
For one human being to love another: that is
perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks,
the ultimate, the last test and proof, the
work for which all other work is but
preparation....

But learning-time is always a long, secluded
time, and so loving, for a long while ahead
and far on into life, is--solitude,
intensified and deepened loneliness for him who
loves.

--Rainer Maria Rilke

As Dominican monastic women we follow the way of the apostolic Church and seek to emulate the early christians' fervor and fidelity to the Gospel: to the good news of God who became flesh, who suffered, died and rose, and who now pours out his Spirit of love upon us to make us his friends. On the last day of his earthly life, our Lord prayed that all might be one, that all might share the unity that exists between himself and the Father. This unity, accomplished in us through the gift of the Spirit, is the ultimate goal of all christians. John Cassian assures us that it will be accomplished, because it will be brought about as a result of this prayer of the Son which is efficacious and "can in no way be rendered void."¹ As the Spirit is breathed forth into our hearts, we are drawn into the unity that exists between the Father and the Son and at the same time enter into fellowship with one another (1 Jn. 1:3). Community life is a celebration of this fellowship, of this unity that already exists among us as a result of a mutual sharing in the life of the Trinity. We pray together, study together, eat together, work and recreate together because we are one organism that lives and breathes God, that is continually drawing life from one source and responding in love to one end.

However, we are not yet perfectly one, and community life also serves as a means toward our goal. The irritations and frictions of day-to-day life together make it obvious that we are not fully united; at the same time they offer us infinite opportunities for exercising our desire for unity. This tension can finally lead us to the realization that we are not yet perfectly one as a group because we are not yet perfectly one as individuals, that we lack the internal unification necessary for true communion with others. We harbor within our hearts demons of darkness, disorder and division which prevent us from being fully given over to the Spirit who alone can unite us. How can we expel these demons, these forces of disunity, and learn to surrender more fully to the love, light and unity of the Spirit?

Louis Bouyer deals with this question while discussing Antony and the origins of monasticism in his Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers. He explains that it was Antony's withdrawal into solitude that occasioned the spiritual combat which led to the expulsion of the demons and surrender to the Spirit. He suggests that it was this discipline that brought about the holy man's internal unity and allowed the Spirit to displace completely the disintegrating powers of darkness so that Antony could live fully dominated by the breath of God. And Bouyer speaks of Antony's solitude as "simply the means of effectively gaining integral charity."²

It has been stated above that community life is both a celebration of and a means toward our goal, and that solitude too helps us to grow towards union with God and with one another in God. What is it about solitude that makes it such an effective means? What is it about this discipline that enables us to live together in the way that Augustine and Dominic envisaged--as friends on the way to God? The following pages will seek to answer these questions by suggesting that solitude provides a way of surmounting certain obstacles to community life--namely, loneliness, the false self, and the fear of suffering--and that it makes possible true friendship by the transformation it brings about.

The first of these obstacles, loneliness, is perhaps a greater problem today than it ever has been. The cause of this widespread ailment which so characterizes our time could be traced back to certain philosophical notions that underlie the attitudes and values of our culture. There has been a major shift in the way that people view the human person. Far different from the God-centered and community-oriented world view prevalent in New Testament times, or the time of Antony or even Dominic, our contemporary understanding of the world places great stress on the individual as independent and autonomous. God is no longer seen as intimately involved with his creation, sustaining it at every instant, but is viewed as having set everything in motion and then having faded into the background. The human person is thus left at the center of reality, with no direct appeal to a higher being and no sense of a superior destiny. Each man and woman must search for meaning within themselves. The more God's place has yielded to the human person, the more isolated and helpless the individual has become. Though most people are unaware of the philosophical presuppositions which have led to this isolation and helplessness, they are the roots of a deep loneliness.

Tension and anxiety arise as the individual is forced to assume an exaggerated independence and to function as a god. People somehow know that they are not isolated centers of being. Something in them rebels against this predicament. We are by nature social creatures and it is this pulse within us that cries out for fulfillment. Too often, however, people are pressured into playing the role of the "autonomous self" in order to meet

society's standards. So they play the game and develop a facade, a persona, and grow increasingly alienated from their true selves. Without any clear goal to draw them forward and regulate their behavior, they act in a way that reaches out to the only perceived good: social acceptance. Over time people develop patterns of thinking and acting that insure peer approval, at the cost of divorcing them from the true reality of who they are. The development of this false external self creates an even deeper loneliness and obstacle to community. Nobody can really know the person for, cut off from their inner reality, they don't even know themselves.

Persons drawn to community life may think that they can find here a solution to the problem of loneliness. They can, but it will be one that is quite different from what they initially expected. It may be thought that surrounding oneself with others will soothe the discomfort of loneliness. However, this way of using other people only creates further barriers. True community is only possible among people who have acknowledged and accepted the aloneness that is part of the human condition and have gone on to discover the self who lies dormant in the still center beneath the masks and clamor of the social personality. Only by truly coming to know ourselves in this way do we find the strength we need to take responsibility for our own appropriation and living out of the ideals of the monastic life. If we do not find and utilize our own inner strength, we spend our lives clinging to others and identifying with them and their appropriation of the ideals. This process of discovery requires solitude and the acceptance of a painful struggle, an acceptance which goes completely against the cultural grain.

It goes against the grain because of the current emphasis on feeling good and the plethora of available antidotes for every imaginable malady. In the face of this "well-being" attitude, it is a very difficult task to come to the realization of the inevitability of suffering and to appreciate its transforming power. And yet, in the words of Henri DeLubac:

There is one way only of being happy: not to be ignorant of suffering, and not to run away from it, but to accept the transfiguration it brings.

This is not in any way to advocate the search for or cultivation of suffering for its own sake, but rather a willingness to accept it for the sake of a higher good. DeLubac clarifies this point:

To welcome suffering is not to take pleasure in it. It is not love of suffering for its own sake. It is consent to one's humiliation by it. It is the opening of oneself to the blessings of what is inevitable, like earth which allows the water of heaven to soak

right through it.⁴

Loneliness, the false self, and the fear of suffering can all be barriers to the authentic common life to which we are called. Solitude turns us around and brings us face to face with all this and more. It can be--if we allow it to be--the arena of our re-creation in Christ, and therefore the "means of effectively gaining integral charity."

The primary characteristic of this solitude, which can be the field of our remaking, is that it is a place of confrontation with the truth: the truth of who we are now before God, and who we are called to be; and the truth of who God is both in himself and for us. This confrontation takes place through the medium of the Word that we ponder in the silence which pervades our day and especially when we are alone in our cells. This confrontation brings us right into the heart of our faith: the dying and rising of the Word made flesh. We die as we surrender the protective walls that we have constructed so carefully in order to shield ourselves from pain. We suffer as we wade through layers of unfreedom and come to the realization of our own sinfulness and poverty. But it is precisely this dying, this "consent to humiliation," that makes possible the new life. "Opening oneself to suffering...enables one to discover a love that is deeper than suffering."⁵

The ground of this love is discovered beneath the brokenness and pain which come to view as the light of the Word flashes within us. It is the hidden self, the core of who we are--what the Zen masters refer to as the shape of our original face. This original face is the spark of being that came into existence by a free act of God's love. It is here on this deepest level of ourselves that we are reborn, refashioned, recreated in the image of the Son. Here God once again touches us with his creative love and makes the spark of being burst forth into the flame of true charity. This is what solitude is meant to do: to bring us into a deeper union with the Son and create new space in us for the Spirit. When understood in this way, it could never degenerate into mere withdrawal and isolation but only lead to the highest form of communion, a communion that reaches out to the whole human family as well as to those with whom we are more closely associated.

It reaches out as we enter more deeply into the rhythm of dying and rising and learn that the experience of our own pain offers an entry place in us for the suffering of an agonized world. As this anguish cuts more deeply into us, we come with increasing ardor before the Father who can and will make all things new. One in Spirit with our suffering sisters and brothers throughout the world, we cry out for the fullness of the Kingdom. As we are then lifted up, in union with the Risen One, so too the world is mysteriously charged with new life. There is, as a result, a marvelous movement towards the realization of

God's plan to "bring everything together under Christ as head" (Ephes. 1:10).

On a more immediate level, something happens in solitude that can enhance our communion with those around us. This takes place when we discover the inner self, a place of silence beneath the noisy endeavors of the ego, and there hear and receive the Word of truth. Penetrated more and more by God's silent wisdom, we come to a clearer perception of reality and can more freely know and choose the good. Our actions become freer in that they are guided by reason rather than by the impulses of our passions. We can become masters of our own actions because we are alert, no longer buried beneath layers of artificiality and unconscious behavior patterns. We no longer need to work so hard to shield a wounded, nebulous self from pain. There is a new freedom to consider our goal and to choose intelligently actions that will move us in the direction that we really want to go.

As we grow in goodness by these choices that we make, our relationships with others change. They are no longer simply based on usefulness--what others can do for us--or on pleasure--the emotional satisfaction that others provide--but are based on a common goodness or virtue. And this alone provides the possibility of true and lasting friendship. As Cassian says:

There is one kind of love which is indissoluble, where the union is owing...simply to similarity of virtue.... True harmony and undivided union can only exist among those whose life is pure, and who are men of the same goodness and purpose.

Realistically we know the truth of Evagrius' statement that "it is not possible to love all the brethren to the same degree,"⁷ and that the friendship between Cassian and Germanus referred to here is a special gift. But we also know that, if we are faithful to the means, it is possible to dwell together in unity--the main purpose for which we have come together.

One of the primary means that requires our fidelity is solitude, a solitude in which we place ourselves before a God who searches us and knows us with a knowledge that is love. This searching, knowing love penetrates and transforms us and liberates that within us which alone is capable of true unity. This restoration of the image of the Son in us enables us to live together with one mind and heart. Having put on the mind of Christ and allowing the Spirit to penetrate the deepest recesses of our being, we are progressively freed for authentic community life. We no longer hang on to others out of loneliness and can, in joy and freedom, show our true face to the world. We accept the inevitability of suffering and the transformation it brings. We become more and more guided by reason and move ourselves toward our goal--toward God, a relationship of persons, and to a sharing in the fellowship of this triune life, a fellowship that

we already celebrate by our common life. As we do so, the whole Church is increased with a hidden fruitfulness and our communion becomes a service leading all to know the love of the Father who has sent the Son and through the Spirit makes us his friends.

NOTES

1. The Works of John Cassian, trans. by Rev. Edgar C.S. Gibson, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. XI (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), Conf. 10:7, p. 314.
2. Louis Bouyer, The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers, Vol. I of A History of Christian Spirituality (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 315.
3. Henri DeLubac, Paradoxes of Faith (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 172.
4. Ibid., p. 171.
5. Laurie E. Brands, "The Spiritual Journey of Simone Weil and the Vision that emerged from it" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1983), p. ii.
6. The Works of John Cassian, op. cit., Conf. 16:3, p. 450; 16:28, p. 460.
7. Evagrius Ponticus, The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer, trans. by John Eudes Bamberger; Cistercian Studies Series, Number Four (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), p. 41, ch. 100.

THE SEARCH

Sister Mary Joseph, O.P.
Los Angeles, California

*One day at morn, (and then the search began)
I found the One who balanced a bird's wings
And cadenced its song in the April brook,
And later flushed its full-throated glory
In an Autumn sky.
I found Him who held the reigns
Of the wild horses of the wind,
The same One who first whispered
So tenderly in a quiet breeze.
I met Him in a friend
And the discovery filled my life with joy.
I had found the One
In the bird and its song,
In the wind, and the friend.
I had found the One in them.*

*Then another day at noon
The bird was seen no more in the sky,
Not the trail of a cloud
To tell of its passing.
The wild wind whispered down
To a still noon breeze,
And the sound of the friendly voice
Was stilled as a pause
In the music of life.*

*Today in the quiet of evening
In a great mystery of discovery,
I have found them all in God,
The bird and its song,
The wind, and the friend,
Now - not only Him in them
But them in Him.*

*I press on in the search,
Weave Him like strands
In the warp and woof of my life,
Wear Him as a mantle.
He is my name.
Living and breathing,
We are the same.*

WHEN WE CRY *ABBA, FATHER!*

- Mother Mary Margaret, O.P., Buffalo

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified (Rom. 8:29-30).

i

Paul, WHEN did you first conceive of the fatherhood of God?
Was it when the heavens opened and witnessed your wrath
against your brother Stephen?
Was his cry of forgiveness,
like that of his crucified Master's,
the stinging spear that pierced the rhythmic beat of
sin-death, sin-death, sin-death
rampantly raging in your heart?

Was it then that, unsought,
unknown to you
the hand of a merciful all-knowing Father
tossed into the soil of your soul
the seed of faith
steeped in the blood of the Lamb?

FOREKNOWN!

ii

WHERE, *Paul*, did you first perceive the fatherhood of God?
Was it on the way to the street called Straight?
(Blinded by the dazzling light of God's Son
you had reached for helping hands to lead you
as a child reaches for the strong hands of its father.)

Fear not, favored one,
predestined,
chosen as the Father's vessel of election!
Fear not to meet the herald of good news.

Ananias is coming. Heed him!
Let Ananias' hands
bring you the Father's healing light,
TRUTH,
leading you further along the road to sight.
For does not he who sees the Son see the Father also?

PREDESTINED!

iii

HOW did you know, *Paul*,
 that you were fashioned
 by the fatherhood of God
 to be an apostle of his only-begotten Son,
 first-born of many brethren?

In baptism you were buried with the eternal Word of the Father
 so that newness of life in the Spirit would be your inheritance.

Child of God, adopted by the Father
 whose beckoning finger
 fired by the flame of love
 urges you,
 impels you,
 press ever forward to the fullness of Life.

Confirmed by the handclasp of apostolic brotherhood
 you live, no longer you, but Christ lives in you!
 Run to the very ends of the earth, beautiful feet,
 and preach the good news.

CALLED!

iv

WHAT did you see of the fatherhood of God, *Paul*,
 when
 whether in or out of the body
 you were caught up to the third heaven?

In the likeness of his Son
 you captured the all-seeing eye of the God who formed you
 and called you.
 Clothing you with the royal blood of his Son,
 HE SEES IN YOU no longer the Saul of former days
 but an *alter Christus*.

Rightly do you call him ***ABBA, FATHER!***

We gaze in awe as he lifts you high into his embrace
 only to cast you down to earth -- blind, deaf, dumb --
 unable to utter what you saw or heard.

Yes, believe with your heart and rejoice in your hope,
 for powerless you are strong,
 and is not his grace sufficient for you?

JUSTIFIED!

Tell us, *Paul*,

WHO CAN HAVE KNOWLEDGE
of the fatherhood of God?

For truly do you say
that we do not know how to pray as we ought.

HOW then can mortals span the height and the depth
of the Father's Love?
For no rod can measure the saving cross of Love's holocaust.

WHO CAN SEE OR HEAR
the Spirit
as he *intercedes for us*
with inexpressible groanings,
the Spirit who *scrutinizes*
even the deep things of God?

Yes, *Paul*, I quote your very words.
Blessed indeed are the eyes of your pure heart
for you now see the *FATHER* face to face!

GLORIFIED!

*O the depths of the riches and wisdom and KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! How unsearchable
are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Rom. 11:33).*

COMMUNIO IN THE MONASTIC LIFE OF PAULINUS OF NOLA

Sr. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, O.P.
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Monasticism is surely better known for its silence, solitude, withdrawal from the world and interiority than for its witness to communio, fraternity and outreach in hospitality. Nevertheless, through the holiness of a monk named Paulinus of Nola, we discover that lifegiving exchanges between friends and acquaintances were not only available but were regarded as an indispensable part of his monastic life, for they represented a continual meditation on the relevance of scriptural exhortation and exemplars to his own life. (1)

One of these exemplars was certainly Augustine, whose companionship in the spirit Paulinus enthusiastically sought. Having first become familiar with him through the reading of his works, he hastens to address him by letter with words of friendship and brotherhood.

Paulinus' love for Augustine was experienced as so deep and firmly rooted that it was more like "taking up a long standing intimacy than embarking on a new friendship." (2)

This does not come as a surprise to him. For Paulinus, this is "the gift of being members of the one body, possessing the one Head, being steeped in the one grace, living on the one Bread, treading the same path, dwelling in the same house." All they have in common "through faith and hope" he acknowledges as "one in the spirit and body of the Lord and should they break away from this unity, they are nothing." (3)

Paulinus pursued Augustine for his wisdom as bishop and teacher, as friend and brother, and especially as monk and disciple of the Lord Christ. In his reply to Augustine's request for his view on a theological matter, the quality and discipline of Paulinus' communio is made apparent.

This earnest monk seeks to redirect Augustine from his speculative flight concerning the activity and state of the blessed after the resurrection of the body, to the practical matter of the condition of his spiritual and moral life here and now.

He responds:

"...Teach me, instead, to do what God wills, to walk in your steps after Christ, and first to die the death which the Gospel demands." (4)

As loving and sincere as his relationship with Augustine was, he shares an even deeper and more intimate fellowship with Sulpicius Severus. Through him, above all others, he "joyfully found that nothing can be compared to a faithful friend." (5)

Christ had joined them not only as close friends in their earlier life in the world, but also as inseparable companions and partners in the call to monasticism. The affinity Paulinus enjoyed with Severus was so complete that his letters noted even physical similarities that pointed to their oneness in Christ.

"...When I received your letter telling me of your illnesses, I, too, was ill, but felt refreshed in learning also of your restoration to health. To me, this was a most welcome proof of our harmony in all things and I experience in myself what Paul said and felt, that the limbs of the one body share each other's pain and joy." (6)

Paulinus and Severus, although distanced from one another by a journey of eight days, continued to carry on an annual correspondence. Far more than for any personal benefit he might derive from this fraternal sharing, Paulinus valued communio as a Christian duty not to be taken lightly.

"...There is laid up in heaven a crown of piety for all who with perfect charity love their neighbor in Christ or Christ in their neighbor." (7)

The personal qualities Severus manifested to him gave Paulinus insight into those of his spirit. The open affection he showed him revealed the love he possessed for the invisible God. "This love," he firmly believed, "must be proven by the obedience of our faith; that is, we must prove by loving each other that we are disciples of the Master who loved his own unto the end and laid down his life for his friends with the same power by which he assumed it." (8)

As dear and beneficial as the communications he received from Severus are, Paulinus is not content with letter writing. Over and over again he beckons his cherished friend, Sulpicius Severus, to come to him. Several letters manifest his coaxing, appealing to their mutual friendship, anticipating the joys of their meeting.

Paulinus pays tribute to Severus' spiritual excellence and expresses his desire to be nurtured by him, "as by a husbandman who tends his garden." (9)

Despite his continual ardent entreaties, Severus does not come. This lack of response initiates a strain in their relationship. Severus responds to his invitation by extolling the growth and virtue of Paulinus, but intimates that he would not be equal to his friend's austere, ascetical accommodations. Paulinus responds with a rebuke.

He charges Severus with inconsistency in his words and questions if it may not be a lack of faith in the blessings that come to the disciple who follows in the steps of the poor Christ. He chides him by saying that he does not hesitate to frequent the monastery of Martin and he would certainly never have longed to see him had he feared physical hunger.

If Severus is sincere in his zeal to imitate holy monks whose lives in God are genuine, how is it that he did not seek out Paulinus "if he had heard that he had grown more perfect?" (10)

Paulinus continues:

"...I, for my part, will certainly never cease to long for your presence and to invite you here, for the growth of love, which is the fulfillment of the law, is the greatest necessity in the growth of spiritual works." (11)

Again, Severus fails to make this journey. The estrangement between them has now reached its height. Paulinus takes offense at a monk courier sent by Severus and censors Marracinus as misrepresenting him. Even the bearer of a letter, who should image the person who writes it, is a form of *communio* for Paulinus.

He writes:

"That unspiritual monk of ours did not have to feign fellowship with us, as you ordered, nor look a monk in the face, as he would have had to in me. So let him keep his soldier's cloak and boots and cheeks to himself.

"I beg you to send only poor brothers, pale of face like ourselves, in bristly clothes of goat's hair, spurning their natural physical attraction for inner adornment, who are not blown up with yesterday's wine but are abstemious with today's, men who stagger not because of overindulgence, but rather, because of a meagre diet." (12)

In an effort to resolve the crisis affecting their relationship, Severus sent two couriers with letters in a single year. Reconciliation now takes place between the two friends.

We do not know what words Severus employed to heal the breach between them, but we now find Paulinus at peace with the fact that Severus is unable to satisfy his longing to resume their accustomed visits. Severus multiplies his attentions to Paulinus by sending letters through an exemplary monk named Victor, in whom Paulinus takes delight.

In a further attempt toward reconciliation, Severus confirms his esteem of Paulinus by requesting a portrait of him that it might be placed next to that of Martin's in the baptistry between his newly built basilicas. Paulinus resists out of humility, saying:

"Severus, dear Severus, your great affection for me is driving you mad.

"...The only representation of me which can be necessary for you is that in which you yourself are fashioned, by which you love your neighbor as yourself.

"...There, in the unity of faith and grace, I am impressed and molded after your soul; and you will keep me and behold me there with inseparable and ever-present regard, not only in this life but also in eternity." (13)

Through a relentless *communio* that embodied friendship and mutual encouragement, disagreement and quarrels, estrangement and reconciliation with his closest friend, the Christian life of Paulinus is made clear to us.

These communications were the vehicle that brought to full development his personal expression of love of God and neighbor within his monastic setting.

Sharing the realization of the primacy of love in the Christian life with Severus, he writes:

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things he has rendered to me? For the Good God has repaid me with blessings for the evils of my life. Let us, then, make a return of love to Him. Let our gift be charity and our currency grace.

"No one should cite as pretext the difficulty of payment, for no one can say that he has no heart. Holy David gives us example, when freed from the power of his enemies he repaid the Lord with the wealth not of his kingdom but of his heart.

"But the Lord is loved in our persons as well, for He has said that the mark of his disciples would be that they love each other as He loved us. This means that we should have one heart and one soul in Christ, and that each should do for his neighbor what he wishes to be done to himself. For this reason I boast of my love for you in the Lord, for this alone allows me to pay in some degree to God at least one of the great and countless debts I owe Him. For I confess that to all other blessings I have not been outstandingly or especially admitted, and that only in my love for you am I perfect." (14)

Would that the Lord might enable each one of us to claim this one boast of Paulinus of Nola.

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- (1) Walsh, P. G., Ed., Ancient Christian Writers, No. 35, Vol. 1, p. 2.
 - (2) ibid., Letter 6 To Augustine, pp. 70-71.
 - (3) ibid.
 - (4) op. cit., No. 36, Vol. 2, Letter 45 To Augustine, P. 248.
 - (5) op. cit., No. 35, Vol. 1, Letter 11 To Severus, p. 90.
 - (6) ibid., Letter 5 To Severus, p. 60.
 - (7) ibid., p. 53.
 - (8) ibid.
 - (9) ibid., p. 64-65.
 - (10) ibid., Letter 11 To Severus, p. 103.
 - (11) ibid.
 - (12) ibid., Letter 22 To Severus, p. 197-199.
 - (13) op. cit., No. 36, Vol. 2, Letter 30 To Severus, p. 119, 120, 124.
 - (14) ibid., Letter 23 To Severus, pp. 47-49.

open
forum



DMS/OPEN FORUM ON FRIENDSHIP/FALL/WINTER1990

BUFFALO

The place of friendship in our monastery chapters

I believe that friendship has an important role to play when we assemble in our monastery chapters to discuss matters pertaining to our community life. I would like to develop this thought by bringing together three favorite quotations of mine. One is from Scripture, one from our Book of Constitutions, and one from the dictionary.

The Scriptural text is from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: BE CAREFUL TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE. (4,3.)

The text from our Constitutions is Number 7: IN ORDER THAT THEIR CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE AND SISTERLY COMMUNION MAY BE MORE ABUNDANTLY FRUITFUL, PARTICIPATION OF ALL IN THE ORDERING OF THE LIFE OF THE MONASTERY IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE: *A good which meets with the general approval is quickly and easily achieved.*

One of my favorite words is 'empathy'. The Thorndike-Barnhart dictionary defines it as "the understanding of another's feelings, motives etc.". The skill of being empathetic can be developed by being good listeners and respecting the views of others, and by accepting others from where they are at a given time - not expecting more from them than what they are and have.

It seems to me that by linking these three things together we have a splendid starting point for sisterly communion. They are qualities which make for true friendship: unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the fruitful participation of all in the ordering of the life of the monastery and understanding of the views and feelings of our sisters. These three notes of a natural and supernatural friendship lead directly to sisterly communion.

Constitution Number 7 encourages the participation of all the nuns in the ordering of the life of the monastery. Participation involves expressing our opinions. Empathy helps us to see matters from another's point of view. By respectfully listening to others, we attain the goal St. Paul sets us when he exhorts us in his Letter to the Ephesians "to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

In regard to friendship's role in the monastery chapter I should like to propose the following questions:

1. Do you agree that by bringing a spirit of sisterly empathy to our monastery chapters we can more quickly achieve greater communion and understanding of the matters to be discussed?

2. In addition to Bl. Humbert's reason, given in LCM Number 7, why would "the participation of all in the ordering of the life of the monastery" promote sisterly communion?

3. Do you agree that bringing a spirit of empathy to our monastery chapters can help us to achieve what St. Paul calls "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?

Sr. Mary Agnes of the Infant Jesus, O.P., Buffalo

What has friendship to do with authority? Or authority with friendship?

Listed in Number 5 of our Fundamental Constitution are eight ways by which the nuns seek God. One of these ways relates directly to the theme of authority and *communio* and, without the shadow of a doubt, *communio* relates directly to friendship. Perhaps, then, we are being led to see how authority and friendship can be related.

LCM tells us: "The nuns seek God by pursuing communion through their manner of government." After reading this and thinking about it musingly, the question came to my mind as to why these two ideas of communion and government were related in precisely this way. I noted that the text does not say "pursuing communion and following their manner of government" but "pursuing communion through their manner of government."

I find two key words here: through and manner. Through their manner of government indicates that authority and *communio* are not being presented as parallel elements in the context of the search for God. Rather, authority is the means by which *communio* is to be attained. The second key word, manner of government, emphasizes, to my understanding, the uniqueness of Dominican government -- that is, the exercise of authority in the respective roles of both the community and those elected to hold authority, as well as the responsible part played by each nun in the government itself.

We know that from the very beginnings of the Order St. Dominic and the early friars chose a democratic form of government -- something quite revolutionary for the times. Every friar had a responsible part to play in it. It was not only a right but a duty. Certainly in the nuns' present Constitutions greater responsibility has been given to the conventual chapter and hence to each nun individually.

We were given a boost in this direction from the Fathers of the most recent General Chapter of the Order. In the fourth recommendation concerning the nuns we read: "Because the system and structures of government in the Dominican Family are a cherished part of our heritage, combining a deep respect for the individual person with a corresponding vision of shared responsibility for the building up of community and the exercise of authority, we encourage our sisters to continue their efforts to implement their Constitutions which faithfully reflect this vision of an organic and ordered participation of all in striving to achieve the aims of the Order."

In order to achieve a personal and shared responsibility that is enlightened, a certain dynamism is needed. The nuns first have to recognize both individually and as a body that such a responsibility is ours. Then we need to take steps to fulfill that responsibility. What would some of these steps be? I see prayer, reflection, study, research and good will as a few. For some, perhaps all of us, the process is a huge challenge. Yet if we really want "*communio*" then that principle of unity which is our particular form of government will be embraced with a courage informed by love.

In all of this the operative word is love. This brings me back to where I started, looking for the connection between authority and friendship in community life. What has authority to do with friendship, friendship with authority? A great deal, I should think. The love of friendship, uniting sister with sister and including always "the first among sisters", makes our shared responsibility fruitful in bringing about an ever deeper and richer communio. I think it is this kind of friendship that LCM N. 7 is pointing us to.

Sr. Mary Emmanuel, Buffalo

RECREATION

Come break time with me,
take your moments
and waste them in my house.

Place the stone I've sought
all day to right,
I am a tumbling wall.

The day robbed and sold me
for nothing,
buy me back with welcome.

I am joyful
in the sight of my sister
hastening to me.

Her belief is my rebirth,
for she has chosen
to be with me.

Sr. Mary John, O.P.
North Guilford

THREE HAIKU

Tears long held back flow,
 sudden, flooding at a word;
 spring torrent unleashed.

Tree - cave shade of leaves
 sundered by summer sun-wind
 leaks light in ribbons.

Walk a long, dark path,
 circled, dwarfed by clouds and pines.
 Can hope survive fear?

Sr. Maria of the Cross, O.P.
 Summit

CIBAVIT EOS

Christ - Wheat,
 Wind - Spirit-sown
 in virgin earth-of-flesh,
 harvested, whip-winnowed
 and thorn-threshed,

On Rood is made
 our honey-running Rock
 within Whose rubied rift
 the living Rivers rise.

Sr. Maria of the Cross, O.P.
 Summit

DOMINICAN
MONASTIC
TRADITION



LECTIO AND ERUDITIO IN THE RULE OF SAN SISTO

Sr. Mary Martin, O.P.
Summit

Much has been written in the past fifteen years or so about the mention of study (eruditio litterarum) in the Rule of San Sisto (RS) and its meaning for the nuns of the Order throughout the centuries. In order to shed further light on the subject, I would like to deal with another ancient monastic observance mentioned in the RS and in no other edition of the nuns' Constitutions until 1971: lectio divina. Chapter IV of RS states: "Let [the sick] read and work as the Prioress enjoins them." The now famous Chapter XX prescribes: "So with the exception of the hours which the Sisters ought to consecrate to prayer, to reading, to the preparation of the Office and chant, or to study, they should devote themselves to some manual labor as shall be judged good by the Prioress." And Chapter XXI adds: "On feast days all must devote themselves to reading, to the Divine Office, and to prayer, and leave aside all mechanical work." (1)

Can we assume that "reading," lectio in the Latin text, refers to the classical observance of lectio divina? I think we will find our answer in the monastic context from which St. Dominic drew the lifestyle of the first nuns. Let us begin with the Rule of St. Benedict. Chapter 48 of the RB is entitled "The Daily Manual Labor" and begins with this paragraph: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading (lectione divina)." There follows a series of detailed prescriptions for the monks' daily life of Opus Dei, work and reading. Toward the end of the chapter we find the sentence: "On Sunday all are to be engaged in reading except those who have been assigned various duties." (2) This chapter, which is foundational for the observance of lectio in Western monasticism, bears a striking resemblance to Chapters XX and XXI of the Rule of San Sisto, which begin: "Since idleness is the enemy of the soul..." and go on to prescribe, as quoted above, a balanced life of prayer, reading, Office, study and work for the nuns. Such a resemblance between RS and RB is not at all surprising. Both Vicaire (3) and Berthier (4) point out other passages from RS that are obviously based on either RB or the Customs of Citeaux. Vicaire makes a convincing case for the probable Cistercian orientation of Prouille at the beginning, (5) and we need only remember that San Sisto was originally composed of the remnants of two or more Benedictine monasteries of Rome.

The second major source for the regular life of the first nuns, as well as for that of the brethren, was the Customs of Prémontré. Again, Vicaire points out important literary borrowings in the RS. (6) But in the case of lectio it is not a question of literary borrowing, but rather of inhaling the very spirit of a life that relied heavily on the practice of this ancient monastic observance. We know that the Premonstratensian canons of the 12th and 13th centuries spent about six hours a day in the winter and three hours a day in the summer engaging in lectio divina. Important authors in their tradition speak of it as part of the essential balance of their life. (7) The fact that the Premonstratensian nuns very likely did

not follow this regimen, just as they did not participate actively in the Divine Office, has no bearing on our present discussion. There is little or no evidence that these nuns served as a model for any aspect of the life of Dominican nuns. (8) It was the life and customs of the canons that St. Dominic admired and wished to imitate, insofar as these fitted in with the charism of the Order he was founding.

This brings us to St. Dominic himself. The Nine Ways of Prayer gives us a charming picture of our Holy Father's practice of lectio:

The holy father Dominic also had another beautiful way of praying, full of devotion and grace... The father would go off quickly on his own to a cell or somewhere, sober and alert and anointed with a spirit of devotion which he had drawn from the divine words which had been sung in choir or during the meal; there he would sit down to read or pray, recollecting himself in himself and fixing himself in the presence of God. Sitting there quietly he would open some book before him, arming himself first with the sign of the cross, and then he would read. And he would be moved in his mind as delightfully as if he heard the Lord speaking to him... The man of God had a prophetic way of passing quickly from reading to prayer and from meditation to contemplation. (9)

When he prescribed reading for his nuns, can we imagine that he had anything other in mind than this beautiful monastic observance from which he himself derived so much pleasure and grace? Perhaps in his evening instructions to the nuns at San Sisto, he taught them how to read in just this way. In any case, we could well meditate on this description as a model for our own practice of lectio.

The early nuns were expected to do lectio divina. How does this conclusion shed light on the meaning of the phrase eruditio litterarum in number XX of the Rule of San Sisto? This time we need to plunge ourselves into current controversy as well as into ancient tradition. J.J. Berthier, O.P., in his 1918 edition and French translation of RS, interprets eruditio litterarum (l'étude des lettres) as doctrinal study. (10) After Vatican II, this was eagerly seized upon by the nuns as evidence of St. Dominic's intent to give study a major place in their life, as he had in the life of the brethren, albeit for a different end. This interpretation was not, to my knowledge, seriously challenged until Simon Tugwell, O.P. remarked in a rather offhand manner, that "it really only means 'learning to read'." (11) He cites two authorities for this, unfortunately unavailable to me. The challenge was serious, but not serious enough to prevent the Constitutions of 1987 from stating that St. Dominic recommended study "in some form" to the first nuns of the Order. (12)

I contend, with reservations, that Tugwell is correct. Eruditio litterarum means "learning to read," that is, learning to read Latin in order to be able to do lectio, as well as the Office. The support for this contention extends back to the beginning of the monastic tradition. Pachomius in the 3rd Century insisted that his monks learn to read: "There shall be no one whatever in the monastery who does not learn to read and does not memorize something of the Scriptures. [One should learn by heart] at least the New Testament and the Psalter." (13) Virtually all early

monastic rules of the West, including the rules of Augustine and Benedict, assume that those living in the monastery were literate. (14) In Benedictine monasteries, this literacy was assured by taking in young boys (and girls) and teaching them what came to be called grammatica. This term, of Greek derivation, meant more than just "grammar;" it meant what we would call "Latin," that is, the study of the classical authors, as well as composition in prose and verse. The Latin equivalent of the word was litteratura. As Jean Leclercq remarks:

"From now on can be seen the importance of letters... Not that literature is an end, even a secondary end, of monastic life; but it is a conditioning factor. In order to undertake one of the principle occupations of the monk, it is necessary to know, to learn and, for some, to teach grammatica." (15)

In other words, in order to read Scripture intelligently and derive full benefit from it, the monk or nun must not only be able to pronounce the words correctly, but also to know, to the extent of each one's capacity, the nuances of the language which he or she is reading. Eruditio litterarum, then, is far more than merely learning to read (although literacy in itself is a great liberating force); it is one of the gateways to the fullness of the christian and monastic life. It is also the gateway to doctrinal study, in the sense that for the ancient monks, lectio also embraced doctrinal study, that is, the reading of the Fathers of the Western Church. This prayerful, meditative reading of the Fathers in conjunction with Scripture had led, by the 12th Century, to a rich monastic theology of which St. Bernard is the most representative author. I think that the text of the Rule of San Sisto, brief as it is in itself, indicates positively St. Dominic's intention that the nuns participate in the whole of the monastic life as it had developed through the centuries. I don't think that it indicates a program of systematic doctrinal study according to the scholastic method, such as the brethren were to undertake. This was a daring innovation, even for the brethren. As for the nuns, the whole weight of the tradition leans in a different, though equally valid, direction.

Today the situation is entirely different. Women who enter the monastery are already literate and even well-educated, judging the education by modern standards. The Office, the Scriptures, the whole corpus of theology are rendered in up-to-date translations into all major languages. What possible meaning could eruditio litterarum have for Dominican nuns heading toward the 21st Century? In many ways I think it has the same meaning as it had for the nuns of the 13th Century. The nuns of today wish to understand, to the extent of their capacity, the "language" of Scripture and doctrine. During the last eight centuries, this "language" has greatly expanded, until it now includes vast fields of history, archeology, anthropology, philosophy, and so on. Doctrine, too, has developed and been adorned with keen theological insights, beginning with those of St. Thomas. All these forms of "language" can be fit subjects for monastic study, insofar as they lead to a deeper penetration of the mysteries of salvation. If this goal is firmly kept in mind, I do not think we need to fear an exaggerated emphasis on study for its own sake. Rather, we can justly hope that eruditio will ripen into a fruitful lectio, which will pass quickly to prayer and contemplation.

NOTES

1. Rule of San Sisto, IV, XX, XXI. Enumeration is according to the text in the Vatican Library. Translation is by the Dominican Nuns of Summit, 1969, from the French edition of J.J. Berthier, O.P., 1918.
2. RB 1980 - The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981), p.249
3. M.-H. Vicaire, O.P., Saint Dominic and His Times, tr. Kathleen Pond (London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964), p.431
4. Rule of San Sisto, tr. Dominican Nuns, p.8-9
5. Vicaire, op. cit., p.128
6. Ibid., p.432-34
7. Francois Petit, La Spiritualité des Prémontrés (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, J. Vrin, 1947), p.237,239
8. Vicaire, op. cit., p.431
9. Early Dominicans - Selected Writings, ed. Simon Tugwell, O.P. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), p.101
10. Rule of San Sisto, p.20
11. Early Dominicans, p.430
12. LCM 100:II
13. Pachomian Koinonia, Vol.II; tr. Armand Veilleux (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1981), p.167
14. Early Monastic Rules, tr.C.V. Franklin et al.(Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982)
15. Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., The Love of Learning and the Desire for God, tr. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), p.26

BLESSED JORDAN OF SAXONY ON LECTIO DIVINA

Sister Mary Catherine, O.P. (Elmira)

The letters of Blessed Jordan are a gold mine of monastic spirituality with a Dominican nuance. In order fully to appreciate them we need to see them against the background of monastic history and spirituality. It is in this way that we will discover the deep and authentic meaning in the text of his letters and so be able to apply it to our own Dominican monastic life today.

One topic coming to the fore of our attention today, one somewhat lost in the recent past, is that of lectio divina and its formative value in Dominican life. The basic notion and its connotations will be traced here in the study of one letter of Jordan to Blessed Diana. For our purpose here I will use two recent translations of the Latin text into English: that of Father Gerald Vann in his collection entitled TO HEAVEN WITH DIANA in which it is letter 45,¹⁾ and that of Simon Tugwell in EARLY DOMINICANS, a collection of texts which he edited and translated and in which the text in question is letter 15.²⁾ Both texts are printed in full at the end of this article for easy reference. Using two different translations will help to bring out the full meaning of various words and phrases in the original. The first part of this paper will provide a general background of monastic and thirteenth century spirituality; and the second part will be a sentence by sentence analysis of the letter itself.

We are well aware by now that lectio divina played an important role in monastic spirituality from the beginning of the monastic life. Basically, Christianity took over in its own manner and spirit the Hebrew study of Torah, a study with immediate implication and application to life. We need only recall the words from the Book of Deuteronomy (6:4-7) used every Saturday in Night Prayer to give us the spirit of Israel's devotion to Scripture as God's Word to her collectively and individually day by day. The Acts of the Apostles describe the Twelve as needing to give themselves over to prayer and the ministry of the Word (6:4), out of which grew the New Testament writings from their Old Testament roots. The early monks in their desert dwellings spoke and reflected on the Word of God collectively in primitive liturgical form and in their solitary monastic cells they ruminated on various sentences or phrases, or even on a single word until it entered deeply within their heart. John Cassian collected and interpreted this early tradition and St. Benedict gave it an important place in his Rule.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries gave to monastic spirituality some additional nuances which are evident in Jordan's letters, the most pertinent of which are an emphasis on the humanity of Jesus Christ and on love, both human and divine. The reaction against the heresies of early Christianity, especially against Arianism and Pelagianism, though necessary, sometimes created an imbalance in the opposite direction. The reaction to Arianism, in the course of time, so emphasized the divinity of Christ that he was made remote and almost inaccessible, a stern judge and a monarch of majesty and power forcing human concentration on the infinite gap between him and us, between his holiness and our human depravity, sinfulness and unworthiness.

By the twelfth century a change was gradually coming about. We see its effects in a trend of spirituality in the new Order of Citeaux and the Cistercian Fathers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the most prominent of whom is, of course, St. Bernard. With him, the humanity of Christ came to the fore once again and there came an emphasis on affectivity and on the primacy of grace which was inherited from St. Augustine and was later explored by St. Thomas using scholastic categories. Nevertheless, the spirituality of St. Bernard was Scriptural in the experiential, monastic sense, with no trace of the developing scholastic terminology.

As we know well, St. Dominic, following the long preceding tradition especially as it is presented in the Conferences of Cassian, along with the newer spirit of Citeaux and Premontr , took the lectio divina into his own life and adapted it somewhat for usage in his Order, as he adapted the whole monastic way. The Nine Ways of Prayer describe many forms of prayer which, under the influence of grace, were the spontaneous expression of Dominic's own personality. Everywhere and always he was a man of prayer: in choir, in a solitary place, or walking along the road. We might also recall sayings attributed to him by his contemporaries, such as: "I have made my chief study in the book of charity; it teaches everything" (Monumenta Ordinis Praedicationis Historica), and the so-called 'Last Testament' in which he bequeathed to the brethren charity, humility and voluntary poverty above all.³⁾ The affective and experiential mode predominates in these examples.

More to the point concerning our study of lectio divina is the graphic description in the eighth of the Nine Ways of Prayer. This depicts our holy Father as going apart after the Canonical Hours to "sit down to read or pray, recollecting himself in himself....Sitting there quietly he would open some book before him...listening quietly...laughing and weeping...fixing his gaze...passing quickly from reading to prayer and from meditation to contemplation." ⁴⁾In this description, besides Dominic's intense personal fervor and unique personal expression, we immediately recognize the traditional monastic mode of prayer based on the early tradition in Cassian and later classified into four elements or ascending steps by Guigo II in Ladder of Monks.⁵⁾ It is also described by Hugh of St. Victor in On Meditation and adopted by St. Thomas in Sentences IV. We recognize, besides, the monastic custom of choral liturgy followed by 'meditation' or 'secret prayer', especially after Matins and Compline, all of which Dominic took over for his Order from monastic tradition.

Blessed Jordan of Saxony, his successor, was a devoted admirer and imitator of the blessed Father. Indeed, we can often read the primitive documents of the Order describing the attitudes and actions of the one which apply as well to the other. For example, we are told in the ninth way of prayer that on his journeys Dominic would often go on ahead or fall behind in order to pray and meditate, and also that he would sometimes joyfully sing hymns along the way. From the Lives of the Brethren we find similar descriptions of Jordan: "It was his custom, when he was traveling, to give the whole time to prayers and meditations....Because of this he often walked apart from the brethren. And sometimes he used to sing Jesu Nostra Redemptio or Salve Regina at the top of his voice" (XXVI,iii,7).⁶⁾ Another revealing anecdote tells of a brother who came to him and asked him whether it was more useful for him to devote himself to prayer or to the study of the Bible. Jordan answered him: "Which is better, to spend your whole time drinking, or to spend your whole time eating? Surely, it is best for them to take their turn, and so it is too in the other case" (XXVI,iii,42).⁷⁾ In this latter example we can see that prayer, reading and study of the Bible were the underpinning of a personal spiritual life which overflowed into preaching, just as they were for Dominic.

Jordan's letters maintain the atmosphere and expressions of monastic Scriptural spirituality and, in fact, read much like the sermons of St. Bernard On the Song of Songs, with their emphasis on love and their bridal imagery. But it is well to remember that Jordan was also very faithful to the spirit of St. Dominic whose personal spiritual life developed from the monastic tradition in Cassian and for whom knowledge of the Bible as the source of prayer and spiritual growth preceded scientific study for purposes of preaching.

The letters of Jordan to Blessed Diana reflect all the principal themes of the monastic life found in Cassian and the early monastic rules: seeking God, purity of heart, humility, poverty, spiritual combat with the passions and the practice of virtue, fasting, vigils, the use of discretion, unceasing prayer. To these themes

are added those which developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: emphasis on the humanity of Christ, the love of God and fraternal love, the primacy of grace, poverty, and others. These were not absent from the earlier tradition but they were not emphasized and they only regained the foreground at this time, and in a new way. We do not find in Jordan's letters much explicit mention of prayer and its forms, nor the term lectio divina. Prayer was understood as underlying the whole of life; it was an attentiveness to God which fostered the spiritual combat and the practice of virtue, a progressive deepening in knowledge of God's love and a response to it. All of this developed from a constant listening to and assimilation of the Word of God in Scripture. No one reading these letters could ever doubt that Jordan had tasted deeply and constantly of the Word of God and that he expected the same attitude and practice from Diana and all of the nuns with her.

When we come to the letter in question (Vann:45, Tugwell:15)⁸⁾ and study it carefully we realize how expressive it is of the lectio divina in a profound and living way. Father Vann situates the letter in passiontide, a fact which brings out the relationship of lectio with the liturgical season and how the liturgy overflows into lectio. The theme dominating the letter is the love of God made visible in Christ crucified. There is an emphasis on the person of Christ, especially his humanity, but in the context of liturgical spirituality with the paschal mystery as basis. Five texts of Scripture are easily discernible within the letter which he uses to develop his theme: Psalm 18(19):8, Psalm 62(63):12, Song of Songs 2:14, Ezekiel 2:9 (and context), Romans 16:27. Father Vann adds a reference to a sermon of St. Bernard on the Nativity as a source alluded to.⁹⁾ These texts are all woven gracefully into the outpouring of words, thoughts and sentiments of the writer. Medieval spiritual writers knew many of the biblical texts from memory and quoted them very freely, without feeling the need, as we do today, to quote exactly from an authorized version and to indicate the specific reference. They simply made it their own and incorporated it into their own thought and word patterns. The majority of the texts quoted are from the Old Testament. From this it may be implied that if Christ in his humanity is the center of focus for Jordan, Christ is to be seen and grasped against the broad background of the whole of salvation history. Also, at this time an allegorical interpretation of the Bible was still taken for granted in monastic spirituality.

In order to penetrate as far as possible into the various aspects and implications of the spiritual message Jordan proposes in this letter, within the context of all his letters, we will study it one section at a time, occasionally bringing out the nuances of meaning by comparing the two translations used. Jordan opens his letter in the ordinary medieval style and wishes Diana the blessings of the Spirit of knowledge, possibly a reference to the gift as described in Isaiah 11:2.

In the first sentence of the body of the letter he makes a rather playful comparison between the word or spiritual message contained in his letters and that in Holy Scripture itself. In one sense there is no comparison: the Bible is the inspired Word of God and Jordan's letters are sentiments expressed by one human person limited by time, place and manner of expression, to another. Yet, in another sense, there is a direct relationship between the inspired Word of God and the human word. It is an aspect of the sacramental economy that God uses human words to speak to humankind and that these words, inspired though they are, are handed on and interpreted in each succeeding age by other human persons, both those officially designated by the Church as her preachers and teachers, and, in a more general way by the informal communication of one Christian to another. The Word of God can never be exhausted. Each era, each person interprets it anew according to need and understanding. Jordan does this very thing by interpreting the Word of God according to thirteenth century standards and Diana's present need, using for the purpose a random collection of texts which spring spontaneously to his mind. The Word of God has so penetrated his mind and heart by study and prayer over a long period of time

that he thinks and speaks with ease in Scriptural terminology.

In the remainder of the sentence Jordan describes Diana as "taking and reading". One might recall here the well known words in the Confessions of St. Augustine (8:12) which he heard at the moment of his conversion: "Take and read; take and read."¹⁰ There is also a close association of words in the liturgical formula of the Eucharist: "Take and eat." The Word of God comes to us in both Scripture and the Eucharist according to our active receptivity. We shall see how rich this connection of words is in a passage further on in the letter.

It is assumed that Diana could read, and she was probably well read. The women of Bologna in general had an advanced intellectual culture at that time, since Bologna was one of the two principal university cities of Europe, with Paris as the other. In the present case, what was Diana to read? -"that book of life, that scroll of the perfect law which converts our souls, which you have daily before your mind's eye". No doubt Jordan was referring here to Scripture itself, but the implications are much broader. The expression "the book of life" is used frequently in Scripture (cf. Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 21:27, etc.). The phrase initially designated the record of the twelve tribes of Israel and of their deeds, good and bad, before God. Other meanings developed so that it came to be understood more broadly as the record of God's deeds and messages to mankind through the prophets, that is, the Word of God. This Word at times took on personal characteristics, especially in the Psalms and the Book of Wisdom; and finally it was known in the Person of Jesus, the Word made flesh. We see from all of this that both Scripture and Jesus Christ are understood to be Word of God and/or Book of Life (cf. John 5:37-40). This Word is meant to be assimilated into the heart or being of the reader or the person encountered.

The "scroll of the perfect law" expresses the same idea in another way. The perfect law for the Hebrew is the Torah. Jesus came as fulfillment of the law in himself, and he proclaimed the new law of love which sums up and perfects all the others. In a very perceptive article in Monastic Studies: 15, entitled "Mary's Reading of Christ"¹¹, Dom Jean Leclercq describes a tradition which developed from the early Church's iconography. In early Church art both Jesus and Mary are often presented together or separately with a book, open or closed. For example, the Annunciation was sometimes depicted with Mary holding an open book and reading while the angel Gabriel conveyed God's message, as if she was finding the message she now received as the same one she often reflected upon in the Law and the Prophets. Sometimes she was depicted holding a book with the Child Jesus standing beside her. This is interpreted to mean that both Scripture and Jesus are the Word of God which Christians read, ruminate over, are committed to and carry out in their lives.

All of this is implied in Jordan's counsel to Diana to "take and read that book...which you have daily before your mind's eye." He is saying that the contemplative Dominican's chief occupation is to keep constantly in mind and heart by reading, prayer and recollection, the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is himself "the scroll of the perfect law which converts our souls." Such a law is not a dead letter but an active, living force purifying us to the extent we are attentive and docile towards it/him. It is Christ, the incarnate love of the Father, calling forth our love in response. This thought is elaborated on in the passage which follows.

"That law which is perfect, because it takes away all imperfections, is charity." There is a direct reference here to Psalm 18(19):8. This Psalm, composed of two sections, speaks first of the revelation of God in the created universe and then in the law. The Hebrew would have understood it as a dynamic whole. The law of the Lord is perfect because it is the expression of himself as love calling forth like-

ness by means of responding love. The New Testament gives us the Christian interpretation. In Matthew's Gospel the scribe who queries Jesus concerning the greatest commandment in the law is given both the traditional answer contained in the Hebrew 'Shema' (Deut. 6:4-7) and a slightly new interpretation. The greatest commandment is the love of God with one's whole heart, soul, mind and strength and, an addition from Leviticus 19:18, love of neighbor as oneself to be understood as an extension of that same law. Jesus concluded by saying: "On these two commandments the whole law is based, and the prophets as well" (Matt. 22:40). Therefore, this two dimensional commandment is a summary of the Christian's whole theological and moral life. St. Paul gives his explanation of it in the well known Chapter 13 of the First Letter to the Corinthians, as well as in other places (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14 and Col. 3:14). The context of all of these passages indicates that charity implies the elimination of vice and the practice of all the virtues which it binds together and brings to perfection. Cassian (Conf. 3:7)¹²⁾ outlines the three-fold renunciation demanded of monks as that which is perfected only by charity as described in I Corinthians 13:4-7. If we study all these texts carefully it becomes evident that charity is a far deeper and more extensive and all embracing quality than our contemporary thought patterns express.

Jordan understands the sublimity of charity for he goes on to say: "You find it written with strange beauty when you gaze at Jesus your Savior." Perfect charity is a quality of God alone. We come to know it in his Son because in him we find 'the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord' (cf. Rom. 8:39; John 3:16). Jesus is the Word made flesh. To gaze on that mystery (sacrament) as it unfolds throughout his earthly life, passion, death and resurrection is to contemplate, to absorb gradually into one's being, the love of God and the God who is love until all imperfection is burned away and we reflect him clearly. Cassian describes this in his Conference on prayer: "...when that perfect love of God, wherewith 'he first loved us' has passed into the feelings of our heart...until the whole life and all the thoughts of the heart become one continuous prayer" (Conf. 10:7).¹³⁾ Love - primarily the love of God for us, but also the human response of love - was, as we noted earlier, a dominant theme in 12th and 13th century spirituality, along with devotion to the humanity of Christ, expressed profoundly in the works of St. Bernard especially. Jordan obviously read Bernard's works and drew inspiration from them. For Jordan, as for Bernard, devotion to the humanity of Christ was always kept in a Scriptural and liturgical context which kept the whole mystery of the Word made flesh in focus. It was only in the centuries which followed that this spiritual ardor degenerated into a sentimental and superficial devotionalism.

The gaze which Jordan speaks of is the gaze of mind and heart, probably like the meditatio, the rumination which had become one of the principal aspects of monastic prayer. This becomes clearer as we read on further: "...gaze at Jesus your Saviour stretched out like a sheet of parchment on the Cross, inscribed with wounds, illustrated in his own loving Blood." Parchment was the material used for books in the middle ages; and, of course, these books were hand written. In the case of the Bible, the Book, this was done with special care day after day in many a monastic Scriptorium as a prime occupation; and the text was lovingly and artistically illuminated. So, gazing on Christ crucified would have meant not only fixing one's eyes on a cross with a representation of Christ on it (as was just at that time gaining acceptance over the plain cross of antiquity), but also fixing one's mind on the Word of God manifesting the mystery of Christ crucified. St. Dominic exemplified both attitudes as attested in the Nine Ways of Prayer: "St. Dominic, standing before the altar or in the Chapter Room, would fix his gaze on the Crucifix, looking intently at Christ on the Cross and kneeling down over and over again..." (4th Way); "...he would stand with great reverence and devotion, as if he were reading in the presence of God" (5th Way); "Sitting there quietly he would open some book before him, arming himself first with the sign of the cross and then he would read" (8th Way).¹⁴⁾ Jordan was probably sharing with Diana, perhaps

unconsciously, the modes of prayer inherited from their common Father to whom both were devoted.

In the next few sentences Jordan simply elaborates on this theme and urges that the "book of love to read from" (Tugwell) or "the lesson of love to be learnt" (Vann), should be the constant occupation of those who have entered the 'monastic school'. He intensifies his counsel by insisting: "Fix your mind's attention there" (Tugwell), or, "On this then fix the keen gaze of your soul" (Vann). These two different translations of Jordan's words are illuminating. In the first instance, whether the word is more exactly mind or soul, something more than mere intellectual activity is implied. But the expression to fix the attention or fix the gaze is more important to consider. It is an expression which has biblical roots and which was a familiar pattern of the Johannine author's religious and cultural background. The most appropriate Greek word from which the expression might be translated is menein. This word can be translated in a variety of ways, such as: remain, abide, dwell in, gaze on, keep. The Gospel of John uses it with reference to the Paraclete/Spirit (14:17), the Father or Jesus (14:20; 15:4-6), joy (15:11), Word (15:7), love (15:9), commandment. Raymond Brown, in his commentary on John's Gospel in the Anchor Bible series, states:

Jesus spoke of his own remaining in the disciples (14:20); here it is his words that remain in the disciples. Jesus and his revelation are virtually interchangeable, for he is incarnate revelation (the Word). ¹⁵⁾

It is something of this attitude which the monastic Fathers, and Jordan, understood as prayer or meditation. The remaining, dwelling, abiding of the Word, Spirit, Father, Jesus, is basically the same attitude or action as gazing on, fixing one's attention on, or committing oneself totally to. St. Bernard might speak of tasting or experiencing. An inner disposition is involved, an engagement of one's whole being on the goal. Cassian spoke of it frequently:

...fixing our gaze then steadily on this goal, as if on a definite mark, let us direct our course as straight towards it as possible (Conf. 1:4). ¹⁶⁾

Here, he speaks of the monk in terms of an archer aiming at his target without deviation, and so directing all of his "actions and thoughts straight towards the attainment of it" (Conf. 1:5). ¹⁷⁾ In a later Conference he speaks of the desire and the purity of the heart which

...enable it with the inner eyes of the soul to see Jesus either still in his humility and in the flesh, or glorified and coming in the glory of his majesty...Only those can look with purest eyes on his Godhead who rise with him from low and earthly works and thoughts and go apart in the lofty mountain of solitude (Conf. 10:6). ¹⁸⁾

St. Bernard, too, speaks of this fixing of the attention, or the remembrance of God, in typical monastic fashion:

You must fix your attention on the ways of God...You are told in the Book of Wisdom (1:1), "Think of the Lord with goodness, seek him in simplicity of heart." You will all the more easily achieve this if you let your minds dwell frequently even continually, on the memory of God's bountifulness. ¹⁹⁾

Elsewhere, his devotion to the divine humanity comes to the fore, thus adding the characteristic of his own proper spirituality to the traditional monastic mode of expression:

Your affection for your Lord Jesus should be both tender and intimate, to

oppose the sweet enticements of sensual life. Sweetness conquers sweetness as one nail drives out another. 20)

Jordan, like Dominic, combined these two strands of spirituality in his own way, which was much like that of Bernard. Jordan's next sentence, "Hide in the clefts of this rock", is taken directly from the much pondered Song of Songs about which medieval commentaries abound, those of Bernard in particular. So we should not be surprised to find Jordan using it to express further his own sentiments. The Rock, referring to God or Christ, is a familiar scriptural metaphor which bespeaks permanence, durability, strength. We find it so used in some of the Psalms in which God is called the 'Rock of strength' or 'the Rock of salvation'. In the New Testament the Rock is Christ or the Church of which Peter is called the foundation rock. An interesting comment on this verse from the Song of Songs as interpreted by the Fathers is found in the Anchor Bible commentary:

The identification of Christ as the Rock (I Cor. 10:4) made the dove's refuge the sure doctrines of the Faith and the mysteries of the Gospel. The Vulgate reading 'in the caverns of the wall' was applied to the doctrines of the Apostles, the examples of the Saints, the wounds of Christ, the hidden mysteries of God's glory. The suggestion of secret retirement and meditation was applied to the Blessed Virgin...Several Greek Fathers understood the latter part of the verse as the words of the Bride longing to see and hear Christ in the flesh, and no longer in prophetic mystery. 21)

In this extract we may note that one of the interpretations of the clefts of the rock is that they refer to the wounds of Christ. This is very close to Jordan's description and would surely find affinity in the medieval heart.

Jordan continues: "Hide yourself away from the clamour of those who speak wickedness." The notion of hiding becomes more insistent. Diana, or the bride of the Song, is called to hide in Christ, or in the Church. The verse also has a negative but very monastic connotation of hiding or fleeing from the wickedness at work in the world. For the cloistered contemplative there is the suggestion of enclosure, which should be far more a hiding in Christ than from the world, though in a sense they complement one another, since life in Christ implies death to sin: "You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Diana is to hide not only from wickedness but from the clamor of those who speak wickedness, or wicked words. There is the overtone of silence here, not only external silence but the inner stillness of the heart, the mind, the passions. All of this is probably implied.

"Turn the book over" (Tugwell), or, "Take up the book, open it and read" (Vann). The remainder of the sentence indicates that this is a reference to Ezekiel (2:9f). A few sentences earlier Jordan spoke of taking up and reading the book. He repeats the admonition here, and in the context of the passage from Ezekiel it is an intense insistence on fully assimilating it, absorbing and interiorizing it. The imagery in Ezek 2:8-3:3 contains a vivid description of how the prophet is to eat the Word of God and the effect this has on him. Within these few verses Ezekiel is told twice to eat the scroll offered to him by the hand of God, to "fill your belly with it". The actions of the prophets were often symbolic and, in this case, the spiritual meaning is evident. The Jerome Bible Commentary offers the following explanation of these verses:

The eating of the scroll is a graphic representation of an inner religious experience...By the eating is signified Ezekiel's total assimilation of God's message, so that his whole being is permeated by it and it torments him until it is expressed. 22)

The Word of God was the spiritual life principle of the prophet and of all Israel. It was so for Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:4; John 8:28-29), and it is so for his followers, in a special way for those who have committed themselves to the monastic life. The description in Ezekiel is expressive of the monastic meditatio, understood as a constant rumination on the Word of God. This rumination has a formative effect in the life of the monk or nun leading to purity of heart, as Cassian counsels:

Give yourself over assiduously or rather continuously, to sacred reading, until continual meditation fills your heart...The whole series of the Holy Scriptures should be diligently committed to memory and ceaselessly repeated. 23)

A modern monastic author explains the process in detail:

The meditatio consists in applying oneself with attention to this exercise in total memorization; it is, therefore, inseparable from the lectio. It is what inscribes, so to speak, the sacred text in the body and in the soul.

"This repeated mastication of the divine words is sometimes described by use of the theme of spiritual nutrition. In this case the vocabulary is borrowed from eating, from digestion, and from the particular form of digestion belonging to ruminants. For this reason, reading and meditation are sometimes described by the very expressive word ruminatio...It means assimilating the content of a text by means of a kind of mastication which releases its full flavor. It means, as St. Augustine, St. Gregory, John of Fecamp and others say in an untranslatable expression, to taste it with the palatum cordis or in ore cordis. All this activity is, necessarily, a prayer; the lectio divina is a prayerful reading." 24)

The connection between physical and spiritual eating or interiorizing was far more clearly seen in the early Church than it is today since we have tended in the recent past to isolate the Eucharist as a devotion and apart from its relationship with the Word of God. Chapter six of the Gospel of John, taken as a whole, manifests Christ as living Bread in both Word and Eucharist. The Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican Council II has tried to remedy the imbalance. Therefore, a descriptive passage like that in Ezekiel on eating the scroll of God's Word would have been far more suggestive for the early and medieval monks and nuns, when the link between Word and Eucharist was more vital than it has been for us at times.

Continuing in the context of the same reference to Ezekiel, Jordan says of this Word: "You will find in it what the prophet found: lamentations, song and woe." Historically, Ezekiel was to prophesy the days of punishment and suffering for Israel in captivity, and so Ezek 2:10 has "lamentations and wailing and woe" (NAB) not yet including the promise of deliverance. In the light of the mystery of Christ, however, Jordan reinterprets this and substitutes the word song (Tugwell) or canticles (Vann) for wailing, and he goes on to explain:

Lamentations, because of the pains which he endured; (Vann has "the sorrows which he bore" which is closer to Isa. 53:4 and the context of that whole chapter.) a song of gladness, which he won for you by his pains; and the woe of unending death, from which he redeemed you by his death.

Diana is to ruminate on, gaze on, absorb into herself the whole mystery of Christ's love made effective in his death and resurrection which is the source of our redemption. The emphasis is now on the joy of Christ's victory, not the sorrow caused by sin and its penalty. This is the truly Christian and Dominican emphasis which Jordan would want to impress upon Diana and the community of nuns in Bologna, who were sometimes too inclined toward the penitential side of the monastic life.

Nevertheless, Diana's gaze upon Christ and rumination of the Word of God must lead to a positive and practical sharing in the mystery. What she absorbs in mind and heart she must necessarily strive to live out, to experience, by the practice of virtue. Jordan singles out explicitly as elements of this virtuous life patience, humility, love, joy, thanksgiving and praise.

He speaks first of patience: "In his lamentations, learn to have patience in yourself." Patience is a prominent monastic virtue closely connected with humility. Cassian tells us, in one of many references to it:

True patience and tranquillity is neither gained nor retained without profound humility of heart...It will seek no external support from anything, if it has the internal support of the virtue of humility, its mother and its guardian.²⁵⁾

Patience is the practical expression of that foundational humility which is prominent in all early monastic rules. It was a way of life adapted from Cassian by St. Benedict in his Rule and retained from that tradition in Dominican observance and in our own Constitutions as an important element of formation. Jordan, as a follower of Dominic, would have been familiar with that tradition and would have passed it on, as we previously noted.

Following on this exhortation concerning patience in imitation of Christ is the even more characteristic one of love:

"...learn love in his song of joy, because surely he has the first claim on your love, seeing that he wanted you to be a sharer in such great joys.

Vann has: "You must love above all else him..." This is perhaps more directly reminiscent of the proclamation of the great commandment in Deut 6:5 and Matt 22:36-40, a summary of the law, the prophets and the Gospel. It is interesting to note here, also, that love and joy are placed together twice, to indicate that one is the result of the other. In his Last Discourse (John 15:11; 16:20,22) Jesus invited the disciples to share in and express both his love and his joy, that spiritual joy known even in suffering borne out of love and often the fruit of a deep experience of purifying suffering (Rom 5:3-5). Our Father Dominic was a joyful man as his contemporaries testify; and he was also one who had made his 'chief study in the book of charity', that same 'book' of Christ on the cross which Jordan now proposed for Diana's study and imitation.

Our Constitutions tell us, in the section on formation (#111, III) that "The monastic community forms a school of charity whose master is Christ our Lord."²⁶⁾ This statement is apparently an adaptation of the words from the Prologue to the Rule of St. Benedict where he states: "We intend to establish a school for the Lord's service" (#45).²⁷⁾ We note that the Dominican interpretation substitutes charity for the Lord's service. It is indicative of the spirit of the age in which love, both divine and human, was the great ideal. Our Constitutions immediately add that the teacher is Christ; his teaching is given by word and example. This is the Christocentric focus of Jordan. He concludes his exhortation to live in Christ by saying:

When you realize that you have been rescued from that woe, what else should result but thanksgiving and the sound of praise?

Thanksgiving and the sound of praise may well refer to the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours as these had become essential observances of monastic life and were surely a daily part of the life of the nuns of St. Agnes. This was a development beyond the early days of the desert fathers and Cassian

when the Liturgy of the Eucharist was celebrated only once or twice weekly. In any case, thanksgiving and praise for the gift of God in Christ and the victory of grace are prominent emphases in Dominican spirituality where our focus is far more on what God does for us than on our own unworthiness. Dominic must have learned this from his deep meditation on the Letters of St. Paul whose whole exposition of spirituality vibrates with thanksgiving and praise. Jordan's words, too, are impregnated with these ideas and with phrases from St. Paul. One passage from Paul's Letter to the Colossians is particularly expressive of a life based on thanksgiving:

Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns, and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:15b-17).

Scripture scholars find liturgical sources and overtones in this passage referring both to the Eucharist and the Hours. But the whole context of Col 3:1-17 is a primitive expression of the basic elan and elements of monastic life. It describes the unity of the entire life, whether that of the community or of the individual. It is a life dedicated to thanksgiving through liturgical prayer, private prayer and the active life of virtue, each dimension blending harmoniously with the others. Jordan seems to have assimilated the spirit of this passage and brought it into his teaching.

Jordan now brings his letter to a close: "These are short words, but to a loving heart they are long and deep enough" (Tugwell). Vann has: "See how I send you only this word writ very small", which is, once again, more directly reminiscent of a sermon of St. Bernard for whom Word was expressive of many aspects of religious reality. Jordan's message to Diana, out of the abundance of the heart, is brief: as to word length but filled with inexhaustible spiritual riches which should satisfy her needs and desires. As we grow in the spiritual life we develop this interior simplicity to the point where a single word or phrase can engage us deeply and constantly for weeks and even years.

Jordan concludes with a final admonition:

I want you, my daughter, to accustom yourself to dwelling in these words, and to learn the wisdom of the saints, as you are taught and stirred and guided by the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory forever. Amen.

Diana is to accustom herself to dwelling in the word: here is the key to unceasing prayer as understood in the monastic tradition and developed through lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio. A real asceticism of the mind and the passions is implied as well as a surrender in loving obedience to the demands of the Word. "And to learn the wisdom of the saints": this statement probably refers to the spiritual wisdom or teaching of the fathers and monastic authors of antiquity. It is not wisdom in a purely intellectual sense; it rather describes a way of life and has ascetical and mystical overtones. This monastic wisdom is a development of the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament primarily. Cassian summarizes it in a few words:

Hear then in few words how you can mount up to the heights of perfection without any effort or difficulty. 'The beginning' of our salvation and 'of wisdom' is, according to Scripture, 'the fear of the Lord.' From the fear of the Lord arises salutary compunction. From compunction of heart springs renunciation, i.e., nakedness and contempt of all possessions. From nakedness is begotten humility; from humility the mortification of desires.

Through mortification of desires all faults are extirpated and decay. By driving out faults virtues shoot up and increase. By the budding of virtues purity of heart is gained. By purity of heart the perfection of apostolic love is acquired. 28).

Cassian recognizes that to achieve this perfection more than mere human moral effort is required:

We must trample underfoot gluttonous desires, and to this end the mind must be reduced not only by fasting, but also by vigils, by reading, and by frequent compunction of heart...And so a man will despise all things present as transitory, when he has securely fixed his mental gaze on those things which are immovable and eternal, and already contemplates in his heart - though still in the flesh - the blessedness of his future life. 29)

This is basically what Jordan has been urging on Diana, but from the point of view of contemplating Christ on the cross and entering into his dispositions. This Christo-centric approach, while characteristic of thirteenth century piety, is not as far removed from the monks of antiquity as we might think. In the same exhortation to ascend the heights of perfection quoted above, Cassian had written earlier:

Consider therefore the demands of the cross under the sign of which you ought henceforward to live in this life; because you no longer live but He lives in you who was crucified for you. We must therefore pass our time in this life in that fashion and form in which he was crucified for us on the cross. 30)

The way of life the earliest renunciants in the desert were exhorted to follow is the same 'wisdom of the saints' which Jordan exhorted Diana to take upon herself, and it is the same basic observance which we, as twentieth century Dominican nuns are called to embrace. The daily lectio divina, the contemplation of the mystery of Christ opened to us in Word and Sacrament, is the steady gaze of mind, heart and human experience which slowly transforms us, through a life of virtue unified in charity, into the image of Christ because "you no longer live, but He lives in you who was crucified for you."

Tugwell's Translation

Brother Jordan, useless servant, of the Order of Preachers, health to his dearest daughter in Jesus Christ, sister Diana, of St. Agnes' in Bologna, wishing her the blessings of the enjoyment of the Spirit of knowledge.

What do I think I am doing, my dear daughter, writing you these little letters of mine to give comfort to your heart, when you can derive much better and more enjoyable comfort from taking and reading that book of life, that scroll of the perfect law which converts our souls, which you have daily before your mind's eye? That law which is perfect, because it takes away all imperfections, is charity, and you find it written with strange beauty when you gaze at Jesus your Saviour stretched out like a sheet of parchment on the Cross, inscribed with wounds, illustrated in his own loving Blood. Where else, I ask you, my dearest, is there a comparable book of love to read from? You know better than I do, that no letter could inspire love more passionately. So fix your mind's attention there. Hide in the clefts of this rock, hide yourself away from the clamour of those who speak wickedness. Turn this book over, open it, read it; you will find in it what the prophet found: lamentations, song and woe. Lamentations, because of the pains which he endured; a song of gladness, which he won for you by his pains; and

the woe of unending death, from which he redeemed you by his death. In his lamentations, learn to have patience in yourself, learn love in his song of joy, because surely he has the first claim on your love, seeing that he wanted you to be a sharer in such great joys. And when you realise that you have been rescued from that woe, what else should result but thanksgiving and the sound of praise? These are short words, but to a loving heart they are long and deep enough. I want you, my daughter, to accustom yourself to dwelling in these words, and to learn the wisdom of the saints, as you are taught and stirred and guided by the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory forever. Amen.

Farewell in Christ Jesus. Greet everybody for me whom you know I should want to greet.

Your son, brother Gerard, greets you. Pray for us now, until we come.

Vann's Translation

To his beloved daughter in Jesus Christ, sister Diana of St. Agnes' in Bologna, brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers: health, and the sweet blessings of the Spirit of knowledge.

Why, beloved daughter, do I write these poor little letters to you to comfort your heart when you can find a far sweeter and more precious consolation simply by taking up and reading that book which you have daily before the eyes of your mind, the book of life, the book of the Lord's perfect law which brings life back to souls? This law, which is called immaculate because it takes away all stains, is charity: you see it writ with wonderful beauty when you gaze on your Saviour Jesus stretched out on the cross, as though a parchment, his wounds the writing, his blood the illuminations. Where, I ask you, my beloved, could the lesson of love be learnt as it is learnt here? You know very well that no letter can move the reader so vehemently to love as this.

On this then fix the keen gaze of your soul; hide yourself in the clefts of this rock; hide yourself away from the clamour of those who speak wicked things. Take up this book, open it and read, and you shall see how the prophet finds in it lamentations and canticles and woe: lamentations for the sorrows which he bore; canticles for the joys which he won for you by his sorrows; woe to eternal death from which by his death he redeemed you.

From his lamentations learn to have patience within yourself; in his canticles learn charity, for certainly you must love above all else him who willed that you should be a partaker in joys so great; finally, when you think that it is he who has snatched you from eternal woe, what can you do but offer him thanksgiving and a song of praise?

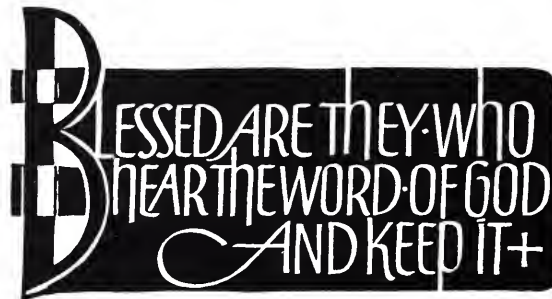
See how I send you only this word writ very small; yet to a loving heart it will be long and deep enough. Do you then, my daughter, dwell on it constantly and learn from it the wisdom of the saints, under the tutorship and guidance and governance of God's Son Jesus Christ, to whom is honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.

Fare well in Christ Jesus. Salute for me those men and women whom you know I would like to greet. Brother Gerard, your son, salutes you. Pray for us until we come.

NOTES

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- 3) Jean deMailly, "Life of St. Dominic" as cited in Tugwell, op. cit., p. 59.
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- 5) Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J., tr., The Ladder of Monks: Twelve Meditations by Guigo II (Garden City: Image Books, 1978), ch. II.
- 6) "Lives of the Brethren", as cited in Tugwell, op. cit., p. 127.
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- 9) Cf. Vann, op. cit., p. 112, note.
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- 19) Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs, I, tr. Kilian Walsh, O.C.S.O., Cistercian Fathers Series, 4, (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1971), Sermon 11, I, p. 71.
- 20) Ibid., Sermon 20, II, p. 150.
- 21) Marvin H. Pope, tr., intro. and com., Song of Songs, Anchor Bible Series, Vol 7C, (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1977), p. 402.

- 22) Arnold J. Tkacik, O.S.B., "Ezekiel," #21 , The Jerome Bible Commentary, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J. and Roland Murphy, O. Carm., ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 349 - 350.
- 23) Cassian, op. cit., p. 440.
- 24) Jean Leclercq, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God (New York:Fordham University Press, 1961), p. 90.
- 25) Cassian, op. cit., p. 484.
- 26) Book of Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers, 1987, No. 111, III p. 67. Cistercian legislation speaks of monastic life as a school of charity, also.
- 27) RB 1980, Timothy Fry, O.S.B., (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981), Prologue, p. 165.
- 28) Cassian, "Institutes", op. cit., Bk. IV, ch. 43, p. 233.
- 29) Ibid., Bk. V, ch. 14, p. 238.
- 30) Ibid., Bk. IV, ch. 34, p. 230.



THE DOMINICAN NUNS: HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Guy Bédouelle, O.P.

PART ONE: THE BEGINNINGS

What is called the Second Order in the family of Preachers, the nuns, is, at least chronologically, the first. Observing a precedence and a courtesy not without other examples in the history of religious life - we are thinking of St. Vincent de Paul or St. Alphonsus Liguori - St. Dominic actually, as we know, founded his sisters before he could or would gather the brethren.

In St. Dominic's time three foundations of monasteries are characteristic for us (there were others, as we shall see): Prouille and St. Sixtus. It was Jordan of Saxony who brought to fruition that of Bologna, inaugurated in a sense by his predecessor. It is interesting to note that these three offspring came about through different circumstances and means, yet supported each other and formed an integral whole. If Vatican Council II, addressing religious life, asks us to return to our sources, it is indeed necessary that we understand precisely what this means.

The primitive foundations

The very first of these foundations of nuns allows us to set the date for the beginning of the Dominican Order at 1206: this is Prouille. The foundation was conceived as a place of refuge and penance.

While St. Dominic was preaching, refuting, disputing and reconciling within the framework of the "Preaching of Jesus Christ," established under the initiative of Diego of Osma to combat the Cathars, one day at Fanjeaux "some noble women" instructed by the Cathars came to him to tell him of their distress and their desire to adhere to the true faith. According to a deposition at the canonization process of St. Dominic made at Toulouse and embellished at the end of the century by Constantine of Orvieto, Dominic showed them Satan, the master whom they had served up to then, in the form of an enormous cat which disappeared up the bell tower of the church leaving behind a dreadful stench. It was at this point that these young girls - there would have been nine of them - abjured Catharism.

Dominic could not abandon them. They were now without any source of sustenance, since Jordan of Saxony tells us that it was "because of poverty" that their parents had entrusted them to the heretics to be educated (Libellus, 27). Moreover, it would be necessary to provide for them a kind of life which should be at least as demanding as the Community of the Perfect which Philippa, Countess of Foix, organized or financed at the same period.

With that genius for apostolic organization which he was to exert so vigorously from now on, Dominic saw at once the importance of a life of conversion which would be an exemplar; perhaps too in the back of his mind was the thought of a place where the brethren might have some role to play or might find a foothold.

Heaven's intervention pointed out to him the exact location of the foundation. The famed luminous globe designated Prouille, at the foot of the little hill of Fanjeaux, on the evening of the feast of St. Mary

Magdalen, July 22, 1206, and on the two following evenings. We note that this was also a Marian sign: the signadou ("sign" in the language of Oc) indicated St. Mary of Prouille, the Virgin of many lilies, the gathering of lilies, a name which was to be considered prophetic.

In honor of the feast of St. John the Evangelist - therefore during the last days of 1206 - the first daughters of St. Dominic received the habit and strict enclosure was established. Two young Catholic girls also joined the new converts and it was one of these, Guilelmine of Fanjeaux, who would govern the community until her death. It is moving to be able to pronounce with a certain probability their names, so redolent of the poesy of thirteenth century Languedoc: Raymonde, Alazaice, Richarde, Guilelmine, Bérengère, Jourdainne, Curtolane, Gentiane etc.... the first of thousands of Dominican nuns.

But they must live and build. The monastery had been established by Diego of Osma who was soon to depart, among other reasons to find money destined to raise the walls of the new monastery (Libellus 28), seemingly in vain. Fulks, bishop of Toulouse, had few financial means but encouraged the foundation as much as possible. Various gifts and privileges were granted by the people of the neighborhood, Na de Cavaers, the lady of the manor, intervening only a good while later, a little like Bérenger, bishop of Narbonne. But Dominic was in very truth the founder and father of Prouille: he it was who, with William Claret, whose sister Raymonde was one of the nuns, was charged with its government in the broad sense of the word, and who had a real monastery built in 1212.

For some time there was a sort of double convent: a monastery of sisters, doubled and served by a little convent of brethren - who constituted the Holy Preaching - together with some people of varying status who engaged to serve them in the name of Christ. Here, therefore, was in embryo the very complex Order with different branches which we know in the twentieth century, in a non-structured form of course. As for the sisters, we can say that their observances did not seem to differ from those of other monasteries of women of the time: stability, enclosure, poverty, a life of conversion, prayer and penance. In the beginning the orientation was rather Cistercian. We have to remember that at this time the Order of Citeaux was the chief frame of reference; it was to her that the mission in Albigeois was confided. But the Cistercians were beginning to curtail a too numerous incorporation of female monasteries which created an excess of responsibilities. It was perhaps out of this reluctance that the Dominican identity of Prouille would be born.

After the dispersion of the first brethren, decided upon on August 15, 1217, St. Dominic himself began his apostolic journeying and made foundations. At the end of 1218 he organized a community of brethren in Madrid. To it he joined a group of sisters; this was to become a monastery in May, 1220 at the chapter of Bologna. We shall not linger over this foundation whose development was entrusted by Dominic to his own brother Mannes, but we should at least pause in reverence before the only real testament written by our Father - his letter to the nuns of Madrid dated at the end of 1220 - because in it he expresses, soberly but realistically, the salient emphases he intended to give to the life of his daughters the nuns. He

speaks of fasting, enclosure, vigils, obedience, and insists twice upon silence with this phrase (misogynist or realist?): "Do not chatter among yourselves, and do not waste your time in gossip!" But within this austere life devoted to conversion are the characteristic notes of his understanding of religious life: the possibility of dispensation on one point or another if necessary; the sisters' absolute independence in the matter of admitting novices, but also in extreme cases methods of action open to the brother responsible for the good of the monastery and its religious authenticity. One senses the maturity of Dominic's thought in establishing a Rule and setting up communities with a physiognomy proper to the Dominican charism. It is the forerunner of the second stage of the primitive foundations.

These initiatives corresponded to a need felt throughout Christendom for a solid reform of female religious life, led by the papacy during the thirteenth century. The Popes wanted to achieve it first of all in Rome, according to a reflex found currently in Church history. In Rome, it was the families of the nuns of the seven monasteries of the eternal city (as many monasteries as hills...) who prevented them from living more strictly. This is why Honorius III, taking up an initiative of his predecessor Innocent III, confided to Dominic the special mission of establishing a reformed monastery, giving him for the purpose the restored and enlarged buildings of St. Sixtus, opposite the hot springs of Caracalla, where a small group of brothers began to live in the meantime. We are at the end of 1219.

Only two small communities reacted rather favorably to this idea of uniting in a monastery to begin again on a sound and solid basis. First, St. Bibiana with a few sisters, then almost the whole group at St. Mary's on the Tiber, also called St. Mary of the Temple, (but this amounted to only five or six), where the abbess Eugénie decided to abandon her rights and those of the monastery and to transfer the patrimony, impaired and indebted as it was besides, to the new community.

None of this happened without difficulties, disappointments, obstacles of all kinds. We recall only two of the best known incidents. First was the accident of the young Napoleon, nephew of Cardinal Stephen of Fossanova, thrown from his horse on the very day chosen for the transferral of the sisters, Ash Wednesday, February 24, 1221, a most symbolic day for their return to conversion. St. Dominic raised the man to life.

Then there was the expression of the divine will furnished by an icon of the Virgin, reputed to have been painted by no human hand, venerated at St. Mary's of the Tiber since the seventh century and which had never wished to leave this place since it had been returned - winging its way back, it is said, like a bird when it had been transferred to the Lateran. Thanks be to God it seemed to be content, thus giving, as at Prouille, a Marian touch to the Dominican foundation: it was to follow the sisters docilely through the course of history, and is now with them at Monte Mario, always in Rome.

This foundation of St. Sixtus is Dominican, certainly because of Dominic's action, but also due to his idea of having eight sisters come from Prouille. They arrived at the beginning of April, 1221, in order, as Sr. Cecilia says, "to teach the Order," that is, to teach the usages and rules of Prouille. This Sr. Cecilia Cesarini, to whom we owe so many personal details about our Father, had entered at St. Mary of the Tiber.

She tells us, but the figure is probably exaggerated, that the sisters of the new community numbered forty-four. Sr. Blanche of Toulouse was named Prioress.

The Rule they followed, elsewhere called "of St. Sixtus," is that of St. Augustine, like that of the brethren, expanded and made precise by usages: in it we find the broad features of religious life dealing with prayer, work, conventual offices, enclosure, penance and silence. As in the primitive Constitutions of the brethren being worked out at the same time, there was a list of faults for accusation at chapter, which were not to be regarded as sins, according to the expression ad poenam tantum, (subject to penalty only), allowing for the regulation of the common life. Allusions to the Rule of St. Benedict and to Citeaux confirm the impression that Dominic was drawing upon the treasure of the Church's religious experience. It is in this sense that he was to address the sisters in the spiritual conferences he gave them, the most celebrated of which took place in the evening or perhaps during the night, during which he invited them to drink from the cup of wine which never grew empty, and which was passed around by Sr. Nubia, the youngest in the community.

The third foundation of which we shall speak received, once again, Dominic's own impulse, but was also created around a radiant and impetuous personality, Diana d'Andalo. This young girl, born of a patrician Bolognese family, heard the preaching of the new friars with intense joy, and fell under the influence of Reginald of Orleans, to whom Dominic had entrusted his foundation in the leading university of law.

On his return to Bologna he met the young and attractive Diana, granddaughter of the wealthy landowner, neighbor to the friars, with whom Reginald had negotiated in order to obtain property on which to build the convent near St. Nicholas of the Vines. As the first brethren at Fanjeaux had done before the foundation of the Order, Diana made a personal vow of obedience to Dominic himself while awaiting the foundation of a monastery which still lacked everything: building, authorization, and above all candidates....

Soon however Dominic, after having heard the brethren of Bologna in their conventual chapter, was to make an astounding decision. He asked that a monastery be constructed "which shall be called and shall be explicitly a house of the Order," and he added, "even if we have to stop building our own." The only realizable asset was Diana, and his idea was very paradoxical if we consider her family's determined opposition. But Dominic's great confidence in the need for this work convinced him that, once the foundations were laid, the spiritual edifice would inevitably rise. The initial decision rested squarely with him.

The bishop of Bologna, doubtless influenced by the rich and powerful d'Andalo family, refused the necessary authorization. It was now that Diana's forthright and resounding dispatch showed her determination and amazing audacity. On the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, 1221, (which was also the day of the Signadou in Prouille fifteen years earlier,) Diana, organizing an excursion with some friends, received the habit of the Augustinian nuns of Ronzano, a few miles outside the city. Her family, being alerted, came to remove her from the monastery by force and Diana resisted

to the point of being returned to her home with a broken rib. Scarcely had she recovered, by the feast of All Saints, when she repeated her offence. But in the meantime, two weeks after the first escapade, and only a very short distance away, Dominic died.

Jordan of Saxony was the one to bring the project to completion. He came to persuade Diana's parents, and on May 19, 1223 concluded a contract with Peter d'Andalo. This gave him a plot of land near St. Nicholas where there was an oratory dedicated to St. Agnes, the saint whose youth and determination in the face of martyrdom had been celebrated by the Fathers of the Church. On the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul Diana and four companions received the Dominican habit. In October of 1223 Jordan of Saxony announced that some sisters would come from Prouille to help the young community, as they had done for St. Sixtus. This proved impossible and in their place came four sisters from St. Sixtus, one of whom, Sr. Cecilia, was named Prioress. The continuity between these three great foundations is quite remarkable. Without speaking of a mother abbey or a daughter house in the Benedictine manner, we have here rather a sisterly service, the kind which we know always exists between Dominican monasteries.

The celebrated spiritual correspondence between the two Dominican Blesseds, Jordan of Saxony and Diana d'Andalo, reveals many features which may help us to understand the concepts underlying the foundation of the nuns at the beginning of the thirteenth century. In this sheaf of fifty or so letters we see a vibrant spiritual friendship, something of normal occurrence in religious life within the Church but here taking on remarkable color and vividness. This friendship, based on simplicity and a mutual striving for God, is one of the most beautiful characteristics of the Order of Preachers. There is a second dimension, that of intercession. Jordan never ceases to beg the sisters' prayers for the Church, the Order, and in particular for the vocations needed for the young planting.

Thus within this triple foundation of nuns who mutually supported and strengthened each other through the network of very human events, financial, familial and ecclesial, we can discern the three main elements of the nuns' vocation: a life of penance in the service of truth and of the faith: this is Prouille; a life of conversion of manners and evangelical authenticity within the Church: this is St. Sixtus; a life of prayer and intercession in the spirit of the Order's apostolate: this is St. Agnes' Monastery in Bologna. Moreover, each community should live the totality of the vocation, and this was the grace of their beginnings.

The brethren, the sisters: growth crisis

The fervor of the monasteries did not abate, nor did the friendship between brethren and sisters and their mutual support, and yet from 1224 on, about a year after the foundation of St. Agnes, some signs of tension began to appear within the monasteries which could well be called a "growth crisis," similar to that of adolescence, and sometimes paralleled at a certain point in the development of institutions. The growing number of monasteries entrusted to the care of the Order seemed to present a task too burdensome for the brethren, taking them away from their apostolate or from study. Paradoxically, the Dominicans very soon met the same problem as the Cistercians, although it was this very obstacle which had earlier on caused Prouille to be taken under the protection of St. Dominic's friars.

The first warning signal sounded at the general chapter of Paris in 1224. There was an enormous number of sisters in Germany, due to the fact

that the Order had incorporated a number of already existing groups. It was accordingly decided that the brethren would in future no longer have charge of these monasteries. Badly informed, the Provincial of Lombardy decided to discontinue the brethrens' assistance to the monastery of St. Agnes. We can imagine the protests of Diana and the efficacious intervention of Jordan to reaffirm this spiritual aid at Bologna. But the incident is symptomatic of a certain malaise.

What was the actual situation? The monasteries of the four primitive foundations belonged fully to the Order and enjoyed its privileges, including exemption, since they were under Dominican jurisdiction. A custom had also been established whereby the acts of general chapters, insofar as they concerned the sisters, obliged them. But there were many other situations where episcopal jurisdiction seemed in some sort delegated to the brethren. And there were times when it was not all that clear how complete the sister's affiliation to the Order really was.

From the point of view of legislation, confusion soon set in. The nuns first followed the so-called rule of St. Sixtus, embellished by Statutes which in the end predominated. But other texts were not slow to appear here and there; we note only the rule of Montargis, which was without doubt drawn up by Humbert of Romans for the monastery founded in 1245 by Amicie of Joigny, the daughter of Simon de Montfort, St. Dominic's former friend and supporter in Languedoc.

Concretely, then, there would be a monastery, governed normally by a prioress elected by the sisters. Nearby would be a house reserved for six brothers, four of them usually priests, whose prior took care of the nuns' business affairs and matters negotiated outside the enclosure. The Provincial had to make an annual visitation of the monastery. Obviously the brethren's integration and interpenetration in the life of the nuns was considerable.

Is it possible to assess the situation quantitatively? It is, because of various statistics on the monasteries recorded at different periods. In 1244 there were fifty monasteries (there would be fifty-eight in 1277): of this number, forty were in Germanic regions, with seven in the city of Strasbourg alone; seven within the limits of Italy, five in France and a few others elsewhere. A rapid calculation is possible and easy: if we take the count in 1244 and allow for six brothers to a monastery, it can be seen that the service of the sisters alone mobilized close to three hundred friars, most of whom had to possess eminent qualities in order to be able to handle the delicate problems which can arise in monasteries... It was an impossible situation. It is true that this figure is small compared to the total number of brethren at this period, such as is recorded in 1255 - nearly nine thousand. But for the same year Humbert of Romans states that three hundred brethren of the Order had died, and in the following year three hundred and twenty. Nor should these statistics blind us to the problems arising in some provinces, especially Germany and Italy, and the fact that the demand for the brethren was not distributed over the entire Order.

We can see therefore the increasing acuteness of the difficulty. The sisters wanted to remain under the jurisdiction of the Order and to benefit from the help of the brethren; these, in order to better respond to apostolic needs, wanted to disengage themselves. The brethren were realizing that care for the nuns' interests, particularly secular and financial ones, took them too far afield from their own common observance.

To make a long story short - for the solving of the problem took several decades with many reversals - we can say that the Master General, John of Wildehausen, tried to implement the decision of Pope Innocent IV who in 1243 had withdrawn the monasteries from the jurisdiction of the Order and had thereby dispensed the brethren from continuing the services they had rendered up till then. But in the following year the nuns, beginning with St. Sixtus and demonstrating a patience and tenacity which were wholly feminine, recovered their lost ground. By 1246 thirty monasteries had succeeded in obtaining a contrary statute and remained incorporated in the Dominican Order.

At the general chapter of 1252 the original position was reaffirmed, then reconfirmed by the Holy See. But by 1257 some monasteries had once more retrieved their incorporation, for example Madrid, St. Agnes and Montargis. Other requests soon streamed in ... For about fifteen years the fraternal struggle between brethren and sisters continued. The sisters found a weighty advocate in the person of the pontifical legate in Germany, the Dominican Hugh of St. Cher.

At this point, moreover, the Master of the Order, Humbert of Romans, showed himself less radical than his predecessors in the matter. He drew up, then imposed, a new text of the Constitutions for the nuns, inspired by that of Montargis, which was promulgated by the general chapter of Valenciennes in 1259. This measure provided unification of legislation which had become too diverse.

After taking a census of all the monasteries, carefully distinguishing between those which had been approved and incorporated by a Master General, a general chapter or a Pope, and all the others, came the decision which brought an end to the growth crisis. On February 6, 1267 Pope Clement IV asked the brethren of the Order to retain the government of the nuns, but with a compromise. The brethren were to set up reforms and could if necessary appoint prioresses or remove from office those elected by the sisters. These would be periodic and for the most part exceptional measures. The important thing was the duty of vigilance in regard to the Constitutions. A change was that the brethren need no longer live close to the monasteries, except at Prouille, St. Sixtus and Madrid, the three monasteries founded during St. Dominic's lifetime. For the others, the Order would supply a chaplain if possible. As for the material services formerly rendered by the brethren, the sisters could appeal to oblates or even to laybrothers.

This long-sought compromise went into effect. The sequence of events was to prove that the authentic, spiritual service which the friars could and should render to the nuns did not require their residence nearby - a thing which had often posed problems. Their influence upon mystics and holy nuns had been strong over the ages, as we shall see in PART TWO, but we must admit today that the first beneficiaries were the brethren themselves, and with them the entire Order of Preachers.

The history of the beginnings of the monasteries has already shown us the mysterious interaction between the two Dominican branches. A celebrated, moving and magnificent passage from Jordan of Saxony to Diana is there to prove it: "Am I not always yours, always with you? Yours in rest as in labor; yours afar as well as near; yours in prayer, yours in merit, and yours, I hope, in the reward?"

PART TWO: ERA OF SAINTS AND MYSTICS

If we are going to consider the high points in the history of the Dominican nuns, we should take a good look at that lengthy period, rich as it was troubled, stretching from the end of the thirteenth century (after the great successes of the foundations we have already described) to the middle of the fifteenth. We might call this a deepening of Dominican mysticism and sanctity. These two centuries, the fourteenth and fifteenth, evidence the vitality of the Dominican Second Order. In order to realize its magnitude we have to situate it in the heart of the particularly difficult events the Church was then going through, even though we can only touch on them here.

Two pivotal geographic centers stand out in our Dominican history at the end of the Middle Ages. Firstly Germany, or more broadly, the Germanic regions, and secondly Italy, troubled by the confused aspirations and rivalries of the first European Renaissance, which was born in the not yet unified Italian peninsula.

We have to remember first of all that the Papacy had finally resolved the conflict created by the impossibility of the brethren devoting most of their time to the defense and administration of the nuns' interests, especially temporal ones, and the nuns' determination to avail themselves of the help of the brethren of their Order. It had been decided that the brethren would provide spiritual help and relinquish the material tasks they had been doing for the nuns. It must be admitted that this decision was very much in line with St. Dominic's desires in regard to the apostolate of his sons. The compromise addressed both apostolic realism and the need for communion between brothers and sisters. And the first results of this decision, which developed as collaboration and mutual upbuilding, were of an exceptional quality. The vitality thus controlled and channeled was to issue in one of the most important mystical movements in Christian history. Master theologians, and great thinkers and mystics as well, did not hesitate to preach and teach in the monasteries. Often enough, it is only through these Dominican nuns that their thought has come down to us.

The Rhineland school

We should first mention the upsurge of life which swept over the regions of the Rhine, and a bit more broadly, the Germanic countries, associating with it three great, complementary personalities who, combining very different temperaments, formed a school.

Eckhart of Hochheim (d. 1327) came from Thuringia and belonged to the Dominican Germany which had just given us Jordan of Saxony and Albert the Great. Entering the Order at Erfert he went to study at Cologne, famous center of theological thought where St. Albert had spent the last years of his life. Eckhart, who for his disciples and for us as well becomes "Master" Eckhart, was involved in very intense activity in government and teaching at the beginning of the fourteenth century. His thought was to meet with remarkable success after his death in spite of the suspicion which was aroused because of certain formulas he used a few years before his death. His defense and his eminence were assured however by two exceptional disciples who knew how to bring into relief the riches of his spiritual thought without overstressing the audacious paradoxes of the master.

The first of these was John Tauler (d.1361), a student of Eckhart at Cologne. In Strasbourg, his native city, he was preacher to the Dominican nuns of the monastery of St. Nicholas, where his sister had entered. He left no major work, but we know certain of his writings, and above all his preaching, through the notes taken by his listeners. He left Strasbourg for Bale because of the conflict between Louis of Bavaria and the Papacy which was rending Christendom. It was one of many medieval episodes of confrontation between empire and papacy, but one of the most violent, presaging tensions within the Church itself. In Bale Tauler created or joined another circle of mystics centering around Henry of Nordlingen, and through them came to know the Dominican nun Margaret Ebner. The group was called the "Friends of God", and included male religious, nuns, beguines and lay people.

Then there was Blessed Henry Suso (d.1366) who was also influenced by Eckhart, his teacher in Cologne after he had entered the convent in Constance in early youth. We know his life well through the account he left to Elizabeth Stagel, a Dominican nun of Toss.

For our access to the Rhineland mystics, therefore, we are indebted to these Dominican nuns who were the immediate beneficiaries of the preaching and teaching of Master Eckhart's disciples. Eckhart was the thinker of the movement, while Tauler was its preacher and Suso its poet.

But this movement was complex and included many personalities and settings which were not Dominican. We ought at least to mention this network of relationships, ramifications and reciprocal influences which could, from the point of view of the Dominican nuns, be set up after the very consequential decision of Herman of Minden, provincial of Germany and Saxony from 1286 to 1290. He wanted the sisters' instruction to correspond to the high level of theological culture which obtained in the Order a few years after the death of St. Thomas Aquinas. He decided, therefore, that the sisters should receive more frequent instruction (he used the word 'preaching,' which shows the unity and breadth of his concept) from 'learned,' knowledgeable brethren. It is interesting to notice that in the phenomenon of the Rhineland mysticism there is not a purely chronological coincidence of eminent personalities and eager audiences: the two elements existed, but were put in contact with each other by a considered determination on the part of authority.

We should also note that the Dominican nuns at the end of the thirteenth century encountered exceptional persons even outside their own monasteries. We are thinking primarily of Peter of Dacia who, for the last fifteen years of his life, was the spiritual director of Christine of Staommeln, called Christine the Admirable, a beguine of the region of Cologne, who lived from 1243 to 1312. It is he who has left us the correspondence exchanged between himself and the great stigmatized mystic, along with his personal notations.

Above all there is Mechtilde of Magdebourg (c.1207-1280) whose brother Baudoin was a Dominican in the convent of Halle in Saxony. She herself was not a Dominican nun, although she calls St. Dominic her "beloved Father". First a beguine for thirty years at Magdebourg, she then spent the last years of her life at the famous Cistercian monastery of Helfta, which was an exceptional centre of mysticism, with Gertrude and Mechtilde of Hackenborn and the "great" Gertrude of Helfta. It was at the request of

her Dominican confessor, Henry of Halle, that she wrote an astonishing book about her mystical experiences, called "The Flowing Light of the Divinity". The original German, which according to her contemporaries was a literary marvel, has not survived, but we possess the later transcription into medieval German made by Henry of Nordlingen and the Friends of God.

We see therefore that there was a literary and spiritual link there, since Tauler encountered this movement at Bale and in Constance. This exchange within the boundaries of Germany between different circles influenced the intense life of the Dominican monasteries which possessed preachers impregnated with identical aspirations.

In order to penetrate more clearly the rather intense and somewhat confused network, we may distinguish here three principle places about which we possess some information, and mystics often grouped around a strong personality. We are now in the first half of the fourteenth century.

The first of these places is the monastery of Maria Medingen in Swabia. It became famous through Margaret Ebner (1291-1351.) Having fallen gravely ill in 1312, she learned to abandon herself completely to the will of God. He in response gave her great mystical graces. From 1332 on, her friendship with Henry of Nordlingen, who was not a Dominican, led her to make definite progress. It was he who prevailed upon her to recount her experiences and who organized around her a circle of Friends of God. Thus through correspondence Margaret had spiritual contact with the great minds of her time and in particular with the brother, John Tauler. But it would be incorrect to think that they exchanged nothing but sublime mystical thoughts: one of the rare uncontested writings of Tauler addressed to the monastery of Medingen for New Year's, 1346, is there to witness to the fraternal spontaneity of the relationship between this great theologian and his sisters.

"For my faithful friends in God," he writes, "Lady Elizabeth the Prioress and Margaret Ebner, I, brother Tauler, offer my prayer. What you wished for me on the occasion of the beginning of this New Year I ask a hundred times more for you from the fatherly goodness of Jesus Christ.... May God reward you for your message and the faithful affection you have for me. In my turn I am sending you, Lady Elizabeth, dearly loved in Christ, two cheeses; and to Margaret and her children [doubtless the novices] two little cheeses, and I hope you will eat them before Lent."

These simple little gifts show what confidence existed between them, and the healthy realism of the true mystic.

Margaret Ebner anticipates numerous themes to be developed subsequently in the history of spirituality: veneration for the Name of Jesus, meditation on the humanity of Christ, (so important from this time on and resulting in Carmelite mysticism), intercession for the souls in Purgatory and finally a great importance attached to frequent reception of Holy Communion.

Let us go now to Nuremberg in Bavaria, close also to Swabia. In the monastery of Engeltal, "the valley of the angels", founded in 1240, we find the Dominican setting for the new German mysticism. One of its great figures is Christine Ebner (1277-1356), who does not seem to be related to Margaret. Favored with visions from 1314 on, Christine was possessed of a very strong personality, and was sometimes prone to impatience, for which the Lord rebuked her several times according to her own account. Her writing draws heavily upon nuptial symbols, which seems to be rare in the

tradition of Dominican nuns of the time. Christine makes numerous allusions to the conflict between the Pope and the Emperor's son, Louis, over the territory in which Engeltal was situated.

We do not find these references to the evils of the times in Adelaide Langmann (1312-1375), a contemporary of Christine also living at Engeltal. Married at thirteen and widowed almost immediately, Adelaide too was given visions. She does not fail to tell us that they were only spiritual, not corporeal or articulate. They were closely connected with the teaching on Purgatory which was being broadly developed then. Adelaide was convinced of her vocation to work for the deliverance of the souls in Purgatory who "suffered no other pain than that of not being able to contemplate God." We note too in her book of "Revelations" the vision of an exchange of hearts between Christ and the believer, which took the form of the inscription of the name of Jesus on his own heart and his name on the heart of Christ. Here we find once again the themes of the Rhineland mysticism which were to have a prolific posterity.

Now we come to the third constellation of nuns in German lands: the monastery of Toss, founded in 1233 near Wintherthur in German Switzerland, well known to us through one of its nuns who was the confidante of Henry Suso -- Elsbeth or Elisabeth Stagel (d.1360). He became her spiritual director after she asked him to initiate her into the thought of Master Eckhart. Clever and intelligent, she knew how to ask her confessor good questions, and also how to write down all the answers she received. Their talks form part of the "Life" of Suso, an account which has different sources, arranged doubtless by other Dominican nuns after Elsbeth's death. It is also to this last that we owe the collection of correspondence which makes up the "Short and Long Book of Letters" of the Blessed.

But above all else, Elsbeth is for us the author of a document of incomparable help in knowing the mystical and also the ordinary life of Dominican nuns of this period. She wrote a monastery "Chronicle" in German dialect which includes thirty-seven brief spiritual biographies of the sisters of the monastery. A similar document written at the monastery of Colmar in Unterlinden by the Prioress, Catherine of Guebuiller (d.1330) describes the lives of the sisters of that monastery in Latin, (Vitae Sororum), and gives us a firsthand picture.

The text of the Chronicle of Toss is obviously meant to edify, but is still pleasing because of the limpidity, simplicity and liveliness of the style. There is no dearth of anecdotes, some very delightful like that of the sister who, fearing to be chosen as prioress, sought out the community's new confessor, who did not know her yet, to tell him that the sister they were talking about as a possible prioress was completely unfit for the charge - which seems to indicate that confessors enjoyed a certain amount of influence in elections.

At Toss the sisters appear to have rivaled each other in the pursuit of perfection. Their devotion was centered upon Jesus crucified but it should be said that in matters of asceticism and privations they were not lacking in generosity. We also see them readily forgiving injuries, doing mostly manual labor but also intellectual work, like Elsbeth herself. The intense mystical life which is described did not prevent ordinary everyday life from taking its normal course, but with another light shed upon it in truth. One of the sisters whom Elsbeth portrays with surpassing beauty was a certain Jutzi Schulthasin. She, in very Dominican fashion, enjoyed visions which were exceptional in imparting knowledge of divine mysteries.

In expressions redolent of St. Teresa of Avila Elsbeth shows us how this sister understood, in the light of divine intimacy, the profound reasons for the Incarnation, the Passion, the mystery of the communion of saints. But she thought that this divine science could reach the point where the virtue of faith was no longer needed. She added that the interior voice which had guided her towards sublime regions also accompanied her upon earth: having seen all this, she now came to believe: "You ought to regulate your whole life according to faith; know that this is the surest and best way." And that is the way in which Sister Jutzi lived the last twenty-seven years of her life.

Elsbeth mentions Elisabeth of Hungary (d.1336), an aunt of St. Margaret (1242-1270) who entered at Veszprim, the first Dominican monastery in Hungary, and made a foundation at Buda, the gift of her father King Bela IV. Elisabeth, fearing her niece, entered at Toss. She served at table and "occupied herself with whatever tasks the Lord sent her."

In a monastery what counts is humble fidelity, and in this sense we must realize that the daily teaching of the Dominican masters of Rhineland mysticism to their sisters the nuns did not consist primarily of sublime and controversial doctrines but rather of counsels of good spiritual common sense. For Tauler, for example, a religious life which was quite ordinary but was lived with love and faithfulness sufficed amply for God's purposes. "My dear sisters," he said to them, "I ask neither great perfection nor holiness of you, but only that you love your holy Order and consequently try to keep its venerable rules as far as you can, and that you be exact about the silence wherever it is enjoined." This is a striking reminder of the little letter St. Dominic wrote to the nuns in Madrid.

Many other people and places could be mentioned, such as the monastery of Marienthal in Luxembourg with its Yolande of Vianden (d.1283), or those cloisters frequented by Suso -- Diessenhoven, Katharinental where Anna of Ramswag lived, or again Adelhausen, the monastery of Anna of Munzingen. Perhaps the most prestigious is that of Unterlinden at Colmar, whose Chronicle was mentioned above, founded by the two Agneses in 1232. We shall let this final quotation give a clear picture of that holy house:

"Unterlinden could be compared to a marvelous garden.... All the sisters strove for perfection, but the particular dispositions each brought to the practise of some special virtue gave a fresh attractiveness to the overall beauty of this mystical school ... their common bond was love for God. All shared too, in the highest degree, in love for holy poverty, obedience and chastity, for they knew the practise of these three virtues, the foundation of the Dominican Order, would lead surely to perfection."

The sanctity of the Italian nuns

Coming slightly later than the Rhineland school of mysticism, and not without links with it, forged especially by the extraordinary preacher of the crusades, Ventura of Bergamo (d. 1346), there was a second center of influence of the nuns. It was in fourteenth and fifteenth century Italy, troubled times and places for the Church. The Order had once more taken up there the challenge of giving a clear evangelical response to the spirits of the times, but this same work was being accomplished in the silence of the nuns' enclosure.

The first Dominican figure of this period, to whom all the others were to be linked, and for whom Catherine of Siena had a wholly special

vation, was St. Agnes of Montepulciano (c.1268-1317). Entering while still very young into a community of religious called "of the Sack" in her native small city in Tuscany, she was elected abbess in a monastery of the same Order at Procena near Orvieto. After seventeen years of government, at the request of the people of her original locale, and to the accompaniment of a great number of "signs" recounted in the legends, she established a monastery at Montepulciano and had it affiliated to the Order of Preachers. She then gave up her abbacy to become its prioress. Her holiness found expression in the medieval manner in all kinds of miracles, (raising the dead to life, cures, multiplication of bread and oil), during her life as well as after death.

We have to remember that St. Agnes represents the first link in a chain of sanctity which a half century later connects with St. Catherine of Siena, who made at least two visits to Montepulciano. We know the accompanying prodigies: the first time (before 1374) the outstretched corpse raised its foot to the lips of the Tertiary of Siena who was bending down to it in humility - a gentle attention on the part of St. Agnes, a courtesy from beyond the tomb.... The second time, a white manna covered both the living one and the dead, as if to establish a parallel between their two sanctities. St. Catherine's affection for the Dominican nuns and her zeal in nurturing their holiness bears witness to this.

In a celebrated letter written to the nuns of Montepulciano, Catherine begs them to follow the example of their holy foundress: "that is to say, the humility, born from the uncreated charity which ever burned in her heart and consumed her". St. Raymond of Capua was himself the confessor of the nuns of Montepulciano just before taking on the spiritual direction of Catherine of Siena while simultaneously being directed by her.... The sojourn at St. Agnes' monastery was for him a kind of novitiate for his great work.

Stemming from these two basic influences, Agnes of Montepulciano and Catherine of Siena, the nuns of central Italy diffused the great Dominican ideals during this difficult period. What we know of these beatified nuns illustrates the life of the Church at this decisive moment.

The general background of the period was formed by the interior struggles between cities, little principalities, small sovereignties which not only disputed with each other but developed within themselves rival parties grappling for power. After the struggle between the partisans of the Emperor and those of the Pope (Ghibellines and Guelfs reverberating in Dante's life and works and beginning to become blurred) civil wars were declared between Pisa, Florence, Siena and in the interior of each small city with a complex play of precarious alliances. The entire life of Blessed Clare of Gambacorta (d.1417) was shadowed by the political rivalries in Pisa.

The general atmosphere was thus one of extreme violence: assassinations, duels, ambushes, crimes, or at best imprisonment were the everyday resources used for gaining power. The evangelical response of peace and forgiveness was needed. This is the significance of the mercy shown by Clare Gambacorta: faced with the dramatic events of 1389 in the course of which her father was assassinated and her brother Laurence lost his life at the gate of the Dominican monastery where he was seeking refuge, Clare forgave the usurper Appiano, not only in his moment of triumph but later at the time of his fall, which is still more meritorious.

The *fourteenth* century was not only marked by political violence but by disease as well, particularly by those terrible mid-century epidemics, best known of which was the Black Plague. At Ripoli, near Florence, the Dominican monastery of St. James was almost entirely wiped out, with a hundred victims. At Florence twenty-four of the brethren died. The crisis, and likewise the fall-off of brothers and sisters during the second half of the century, was due in part to the element of terror which emptied the convents and led the survivors to seek an easier life. Other religious on the contrary found in calamity a spur to a new start. In these terrible times, the best and the worst existed together. By hindsight we can recognize Raymond of Capua's reception of the habit in that same year 1348 as a providential sign that there was hope for a new rebirth.

We also notice in the lives of the nuns of this period that in many cases the young girls destined for the monastic life were prevented from entering by their families, that is, obviously, by their fathers or brothers, especially if they belonged to the ruling classes. The tyrannical authority of the father of the family, accustomed to being obeyed, exerted itself to the full. We recall Diana d'Andalo, and also Thora Gambacorta who, on the day when she received the habit of the Poor Ladies of St. Clare, whose name she took, was carried off by her family and imprisoned for five months in the paternal palace, without a bed and often without food. This shows us the context of the times, and woman's role in the Middle Ages. In an era of mortality due to the plague and of endemic infant mortality, marriage for the purpose of establishing an advantageous alliance for the clan and above all providing it with heirs was an imperative duty. Clare Gambacorta became a widow at fifteen, doubtless in the horrendous year 1348; as for her friend and faithful companion Catherine (later called Mary) Mancini (d.1431), she was married twice and had six children. It was in order to escape a third marriage that she wanted to join the Dominican Third Order and later the monastery in Pisa.

But these women, once they had chosen the religious life, showed amazing strength of purpose. What the woman wants, God wants, they say in France: they always ended by consecrating themselves more completely to God. Here again, Catherine of Siena was the example they followed, hers the voice that encouraged them. Catherine came to Pisa in 1375 and it was there, in the church of St. Christine, next door to the Gambacorta palace, that she received the stigmata. She wrote to fifteen year old Thora Gambacorta: "Only God can bring the soul peace and rest... He alone knows how, wills and is able to draw all holy desires to Himself. He it is who teaches us to cast off the things of this world so as to be clothed in Him." Catherine also encouraged the little group of Tertiaries with whom Mary Mancini was sheltering, and enjoined them "to seek themselves for God, their neighbor for God, and God for God".

Political conflicts, the drama of disease, family obstacles, yes - but the nuns encountered a still greater struggle, division within the Church herself. We cannot forget that in the closing years of the fourteenth century and the first of the fifteenth, for almost forty years minds had reason to be deeply troubled by the great Western Schism with its two and three popes and, in the Order, its two Masters General.

Catherine of Siena never hesitated to proclaim the Pope of Rome as the only legitimate one, but St. Vincent Ferrer (d.1431) claimed the obedience of Avignon even though he saw in the schism a sign of the end-time. If

saints were divided and found themselves in two camps, how could the rest of the people not have been divided also, excommunicated as they were by the camp to which they did not belong? From 1380 on Master Elias Raymond of Toulouse, legitimately elected but rallying to the French pope, solemnly declared : "We strictly command all the brethren and all the sisters of whatsoever condition, under pain of excommunication and all the penalties dealt out to schismatics and rebels in the Church of God, that they say and do nothing contrary to the Lord Pope (of Avignon), whether in public or in private, in speech or in writing."

It was necessary to react against relaxation and also against problems which were making inroads in the monasteries during the fourteenth century. In 1303 there were one hundred and forty-one monasteries, if we are to believe the historian Bernard Gui, seventy-four of them in Germany. Signs of relaxation had been perceptible from the beginning of the century. We do not attach too much importance to Hermann of Minden's rebuke to the sisters of St. Lambert near Spire at the end of the thirteenth century, for having picnics in their garden. But the Master General's letter, written to the nuns of Prouillan near Montpellier around 1312, mentions more serious grievances: relaxation of regular observance, neglected liturgy and too many debts, which burdened the nuns with temporal cares incompatible with their vocation. As the century moved forward examples became more numerous. Neither mysticism nor sanctity succeeded in checking the movement. St. Catherine of Siena's influence was needed to back a reaction. And she was the very one who knew how to rely upon places where the greatest vitality was evident: Germany and Italy.

The reform of religious observance was instituted by Raymond of Capua who had been elected as Master General of the Order in the place of Master Elias, supporter of the other obedience. He began by restoring discipline in the Germanic regions, entrusting the work to an energetic man, Brother Conrad of Prussia. He first selected Colmar, with its convent of brethren and also the two monasteries which the city possessed: Unterlinden and that of the Catherinettes. He then extended the reform to the three monasteries of Nuremberg (St. Catherine, Aurach and Engeltal.) The case of Strasbourg was more delicate, for the five monasteries in that city showed no enthusiasm for the proposed austerities. In January of 1398, Raymond decided to choose one of these monasteries for the privilege of following the observance according to the spirit of his reform of the Order, and left the sisters free to go there. The year before Raymond had sent round an encyclical letter acquainting the nuns with his intentions (letter from Francfort, June 23, 1397). He insisted on the rigor of enclosure, particularly at visits on the occasion of the sisters' clothings or funerals. He thought it indispensable to entrust the reformed monasteries to a religious who would be his vicar and the confessor of the sisters. Finally, he recommended that a greater equality should be established between the sisters of noble lineage and those of ordinary circumstances, to ensure the ideal of fraternity in religious life.

In Italy, Raymond could rely on the fervent monasteries of which we have spoken. At Venice he favored the passage of a monastery of Benedictine nuns known as Corpus Christi who were poorly off materially to a monastery of Dominican sisters. for the assistance of postulants under the spiritual direction of John Dominic. It was this last move which led to the reform of these sisters, who were starting out on a new basis. We note a succession in Italy finding its impetus in Catherine of Siena:

Raymond of Capua (d.1399), John Dominic (d.1419), Antoninus of Florence (d.1459) and finally Savonarola (d.1498).

But we are already on the threshold of another still more dramatic period, that of the Protestant Reformation followed by the Catholic Reformation and a new emphasis placed on enclosure. We have seen how the monasteries reacted to the widespread crisis of the fourteenth century with collaboration, mutual aid and that similarity of reactions between brethren and sisters which is one of the greatneses of Dominican spirituality. We see too how movements of reform and holiness rose up around strong personalities among the brethren as well as the sisters.

There is still another name of a Dominican nun whom I have not yet mentioned: Sister Imelda Lambertini, paradoxically one of the best known, who died in 1333 at the age of twelve or thirteen in the monastery of Val-dipietra near Bologna after a miraculous communion. In spite of her youthfulness the Lord wished to give her the Eucharist. Historic witnesses are few, but the tradition of her childlike sanctity is well attested. We might indeed deny the authenticity of this episode which finds its natural place within the movement of devotion to the Eucharist inaugurated by St. Julianne of Liege (d.1258) under Dominican direction. But on the other hand, we may see in it a reflection of the simple presence and silent fidelity of the many anonymous Dominican nuns who made these first centuries a golden age of Dominican fervor.

Laus Deo et Beatae Mariae et Beato Dominico



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